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TROUBLE IN THE BALKANS

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By

J.L.C. BOOTH



TROUBLE IN THE BALKANS

“There’ll be trouble in the Balkans in the Spring.”—
The Nilghai.



TROUBLE IN THE BALKANS

By *W. L. G. L.*

Special Correspondent

ILLUSTRATED BY FORT
DRAWN

HURST AND



Main Street—Djuma, Macedonia.

TROUBLE IN THE BALKANS

By JOHN L. C. BOOTH

*Special Correspondent to the "Graphic" in Macedonia
in 1914*

ILLUSTRATED BY FOUR COLOURED PICTURES AND SEVEN
DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

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DR
45
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To my two Trail-mates,

Guy H. Scull

.. and ..

Frederick Moore



P R E F A C E .

THE Bulgarians five hundred years ago were a great nation. When the Turks swept up into Europe from the Mediterranean and conquered them they were put under the Greek Church for their religious discipline and education, and the influence of the Churchman in the life of Eastern countries is immense. So that by degrees the Bulgarian institutions, literature and everything that made them a nation, vanished. Their very name dropped out of use, and as a people they were abolished.

Not till the middle of last century did they make any effort to throw off the Greek Patriarchate yoke and re-establish their own ancient Church. About forty years of petitioning led at last to the Sultan granting the appointment of an Exarch by *Firman* in 1870, and under this Exarch the new Bulgarian Church was established. The people, having got their name back, now began to feel their feet a little, and ventured to kick back at the Turks who had been kicking them for five centuries. The immediate result of this temerity was the descent of troops on the disturbed districts and the massacres of 1876, in which about twenty-five thousand Bulgarians—men, women, and children—were done to death. This was a little too much for Europe, and the Powers protested. The Sublime Porte, however, refused to listen to them, which so incensed Russia that she declared war. Having thrashed the Turks, she gave them their orders in the treaty of San Stefano (March, 1878), by which the Bulgarians were to possess and enjoy practically the whole of Macedonia, with a port on the Mediterranean, and their present Principality.

At this the Powers grew uneasy, knowing the hungry habits of the Bear and fearing that he might eventually

absorb this large mouthful of Eastern Europe. So four months later they assembled at Berlin, and under the Treaty of that name overthrew Russia's arrangement, leaving to the Bulgarians only that tract of country which now bears their name. The province of Eastern Rumelia, on their south-eastern border, added itself to the Principality in 1885 without any opposition from the Turks. On this Servia declared war.

In six years the Russians had built and trained an army out of the Bulgarian peasantry, and the higher ranks—including company commanders—were filled by Russian officers. Owing to a huff about the union of Rumelia, these were now recalled and the young troops and their subalterns left to fight the Servians. But they soon showed themselves able to "stand upon their feet and play the game." They drove the Servians headlong out of Bulgaria, followed them into their own country, and chased them to death.

Nowadays there are no Russian officers in that little army, and in the twenty years since its baptism it has developed at a most amazing pace. And so has the country. Parliament, courts of justice, schools, national and municipal institutions—like infant prodigies—are "marvels for their age." The peasant-farmer is still a long way behind the times, but he is a hard worker and improves his position year by year. The Bulgarians have an abundance of energy that, turned in the right direction, will take them far; but they are also immense talkers, and are filled mostly with an amount of dramatic feeling that impels them rather to declamation than execution.

Still, by the light of what they have done one sees a prosperous future for their country.

JOHN L. C. BOOTH.

. The chapter headings throughout the book are quoted from Rudyard Kipling's poems.

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TROUBLE IN THE BALKANS.

PART I. BULGARIA, 1903.

CHAPTER I.

We yearned beyond the sky-line where the strange roads go down.

“PUTTIES, shooting - boots, spurs (h'm — one strap broken), pistol, ammunition, sketch - books,” and so forth, down a pencilled “list of kit,” as the objects mentioned (barring the broken strap) were fitted scientifically into a sturdy brown kit-bag—a dear old travelled thing, with a patch at one corner put on at Ladysmith. The studio was thick with tobacco smoke, and the autumn sun, filtering through the top-light, lit and glinted on small piles of the indispensables of a man preparing for rough times in the open. Out of the corner by the fire a newspaper rustled jerkily, and a voice observed: “Say, there’s hell to pay in Raslog. Here’s a Reuter wire says insurgents attacked Turks near the village of How-d’ye-call-it, and Turks afterwards entered village an’ massacred all hands. People burnt at the stake

an' a real hot time all round. An' here's Laffin'-an'-Jokin' says negotiations broken off an' war considered inevitable. Whoopee! boy, if we can't get our throats cut this time you can call us slow!"

All summer the Sultan's troops had been amusing themselves on the above lines, and now it seemed that Bulgaria was going to strike a blow for her fellow-Christians over the border. This cheery prophet in the corner—yachting ten days before at North-East Harbour, U.S.A.—had fired himself across the Atlantic, spurred by some such news as this, and "coming up with a song from the sea" found me in the final stages of "go-fever," the only cure for which is—to go. So together we rushed to newspaper offices, whose comfortable inhabitants predicted a lingering and untidy death and rashly entrusted us with the supply of a little news from the Balkans—the good old Balkans, where there's always something doing. So the kit was packed, the old studio locked up, and we rolled away under the Victoria signals, "pulling out on the trail again." And now, suddenly, the enclosing walls of the London life fell away from us, and dwindled, with all that was written on them, to littleness and unimportance. One's mind looked from a balloon and saw shops, 'buses, Tuppenny Tube, offices and editors as tiny things in an ant city. Nothing behind mattered. Everything important lay in that vague country ahead, pictured already in imagination. Two hours later, great-coated and hands in pockets, we were on the wet deck of the Flushing steamer, leaning against



A sing-song at sea.

I*

a solid wind that blew one's moustache into all sorts of shapes, and smelling the good North Sea outside Queenborough harbour.

The caps and noses of the Dutch skipper and officer of the watch peered over the bridge-rail—a sort of wooden wainscoting over five feet high. I wondered whether they picked their officers to fit the bridge, or built this garden paling to the officers' measurements. A small man would have had to bore a hole through it if he took an interest in anything but the sky.

In the saloon was a jovial wight, a Yorkshireman, going back to hunt a pack of hounds for a Hungarian count. He was at once christened "Bill," and responding to the toast of his health sang "We'll all go a-hunting to-day" to "Skip's" banjo, with a lusty chorus of half-a-dozen passengers and the Dutch steward. This worthy producing a fiddle, the concert was soon at its height, and long before the engine-room telegraph rang *Slow*, "Bill" was standing on the velvet cushions, inarticulate with laughter, reeling off a yarn about "yon lads oop at Middleham Moor."

We piled ashore and were struck dumb in the station corridor by the sight of a lady in fancy dress. Stiff white cap over her pretty fair face, low neck and bare arms, pale blue dress and white apron. She was the lavatory attendant and demanded twopence in a severe voice, instead of singing something about the Zuyder Zee. Romance is dead. In the refreshment room "Bill" was plunging a portmanteau into the backs of the

diners, and cheerily hurling rich Yorkshire oaths at the troubled waiters. No one understood him, and we got him on board the train for Vienna, where he scared away all intruders, and we soon had the compartment to ourselves. But his was a restless spirit, and after he had perambulated the entire length of the train, we found him at midnight in the corridor helping a stout German maiden to knit socks.

Rising ravenous at five the next morning we discovered that the iniquitous refreshment car was not open till ten. Foraging had to be done by rushes in the four-minute stops at the stations, to the great perturbation of the railway folk, who followed our headlong flights waving arms and flags, with shouts of "*einstage, einstage!*" till we were chased into the train.

The German station officials (they use thousands) wear striking clothes of a very military cut—some of them swords. The best people of all have scarlet peaks to their caps. We used to invite the more haughty of them to chip in at our "sing-songs," but after eyeing the banjo with some curiosity they retired with a polite bow and a look of pained surprise. To avoid trouble about duty on firearms at the Customs-houses on the way, each of us carried his pistol on him, hidden away under his coat, putting them in the rack between frontiers. "Skip," for greater concealment, wore his Colt under his nether garments on the hip, where it stuck out like a tent-pole under canvas. Fondly imagining it invisible he strode back and forth

among the apprehensive passengers, who eyed the protuberance in some alarm. Crossing the German-Austrian border, I was navigating the corridor as the train swung and rocked over the points, my coat falling gracefully over a bulky Army Webley, when a sudden heave sent me backwards into a stout body. I turned and faced a Customs officer, and for five seconds we looked at each other. The knobby cylinder must have caught him hard ; but the dear man's face widened into a knowing grin as he turned and gazed dreamily out of the window. " Bill's " great - coat (it transpired), padded with cigars, had been " thoomped " by a Customs man as it hung from the rack without its contents being suspected, to the ever-recurring joy of the owner.

That night about half-past nine we made Vienna, and the worthy sportsman left us for Pesth to rejoin his pack. They breed a good stamp of horse in these parts, and the pairs that race about in the little victorias, smart and well-groomed, can give points to Paris and Berlin both in looks and pace. They are harnessed with metal rods for shafts, which are fastened to the collars, and have nothing on their backs, which gives them a very light and speedy look.

Vienna was enjoying life that night. The wide streets were brilliant with lights and a light-hearted crowd, and every third house seemed to be a *café* with music going. After dinner we turned in to one of these merry haunts, and smoked pipes and drank *Pilsener*, while an orchestra of

three or four able men played and sang roistering German songs. Now and then a familiar American tune came on, but some bright native had fitted words to "*My gal's a high-born lady*" that could be understood of the people, and, having understood, they shouted the chorus lustily, clapping their hands to the time with an up-and-down motion, as a man beats cymbals. Everyone laughed and was merry, and when one of the singers turned out an impromptu verse about our noble selves and I bowed acknowledgment to the applauding "house," we were welcomed as brothers and holloaed away with the best of them. One of the players was armed with a sort of double-shafted guitar, which seemed to have the bass notes on one branch and the treble on the other. Attempting to play this ambiguous implement I found very like skating with one foot and walking with the other. "Skip" made something ridiculously like a chord with it, but some men seem born to handle anything from an organ to an occarina. My own instrument is the barrel-organ.

The most troublesome thing in Austria is the money. The *gülden* and *krönen* I mastered, but the *kreutzers* and *hellers*—well, we talked most about the last ones. The principal currency is copper, about the size of a shirt-button—I forget how many hundred of them make a penny. To avoid giving away too many, the best plan is to ladle out the chicken-food, as Skip called them, three or four at a time, and more in answer to demands.

In the space of a short stay of thirty-six hours

the best thing I discovered in Vienna was the coffee, which is beyond dreams. It is most cunningly concocted, and they serve it in a thick porcelain cup with a great dollop of whipped cream on the top. One is tempted to prolong breakfast till lunch-time, and then drink coffee for lunch. Next to the coffee come the public buildings. These people certainly have some taste in architecture, and if I had spent a fortnight there instead of a day I might be able to write something about it. As it is, all that remains with me is a general impression of size, grandeur, and beauty of workmanship.

Our time was taken up with finding out news, bothering consuls (who, being fixtures, could not escape) and buying railway tickets; for Sofia is such a God-forsaken spot that Cook's in London will not book you there. The Bulgarian Consul, I think, was expecting some people who must have resembled us, and who were liable to wreak him grievous bodily harm. We did our best to look as unconnected with atrocities as possible, and at last won a smile from him. As for news, the papers had little enough of any sort, but the general consensus was for war at once, and plenty of it.

We sought out some genial spirits at the Anglo-American Club, whose hearts were filled with envy at our prospects, and in their mouths the most comforting assurances of the devil's own doings to come. These led us into the bowels of the earth where music raged through



A smiling fat man sang heartily.

tobacco smoke from two string bands, and people sat in masses round *stein*-dotted tables. A smiling fat man sang heartily whilst slim-waisted officers and bulky civilians shouldered their way about. Brilliant uniforms and cloaks crossed and mingled as Austrians, Hungarians, Bosnians, Cavalry and Infantry, with clean-cut faces under their stiff round shakoes, swarmed down into the press. As before, all the singing was done by men, but some gaily-coloured ladies scattered among the tables occasionally joined in. Great was the uproar.

Later, in the strong wave of a chorus, we sought the air again, and visited halls of beauty, where entrancing maidens danced and sang for us. It was a great night for the sketch-book. Later yet, in the wee sma' hours, there was a "union of the English" in the old school songs, and by the time "Auld Lang Syne" was lifting the roof off, with all hands on the stools and the proprietor in tears, our jovial hosts were ready to sell their souls to go down to Bulgaria, and we ours to have them with us.

We walked through the echoing streets to the hotel in the sharp air of an October dawn. Over the dark piles of silent houses the great tower of St. Stefan's Cathedral pointed up—deep violet—into the pale, tender lemon and turquoise of the new day.

The hotel people were all about, and as bright and unconcerned as if it were mid-day. I wonder if anyone ever goes to sleep in Vienna. My

Wolseley bedding-roll seemed to immensely tickle the hall-porter, who rolled it over and punched it with deep chuckles, observing its behaviour under this treatment with the wrapt eye of a *connoisseur*, and affirming that he had never, never seen anything like it before. I suppose hall-porters are specialists in these things—baggage-fanciers, one might call them—and a new type of luggage excites them in the same way that a new breed of dog would interest a kennel man, or a new star an astrologer. He sighed as he hove the old brown bundle on the carriage, and I feel sure that, had his modest salary allowed it, he would have bought the curio at any price and treasured it as the gem of his collection.

The *Staatsbahn* Station looked grim and unfriendly at that early hour, so we sat on the steps smoking and observing life till the train was due. A market cart stood outside a little *café* opposite. The horse had a cold and sneezed till he shook his loose bridle, which had no throatlash, over one ear. A farmer came out of the *café* and climbed on the cart, shouting to start the horse, which never moved. The man shouted again, pulling a whip from under a rough cloth, and as the horse still stood fast he got a couple of good welts and some more language. At this he merely shook his head, and the man, mumbling to himself, got down and came to the horse's head. The blinker was over the animal's near eye, and he knew the bridle, hanging by one ear, would slip off and get between his legs as soon as he started. The

man grinned, pulled the bridle into its place, and, punching his steed affectionately in the ribs, mounted and drove off. There is the Austrian—a horse-lover, who understands his animal. In almost any other Continental country that driver would have seized reins and whip and belaboured the horse till he went on and the inevitable happened.

This railway company is very careful of the safety of its passengers, and to prevent them straying about the system and getting killed they are herded into a waiting room, and kept standing on each other's toes for twenty minutes before the train comes in. This one was full when it arrived, and away went visions of a snooze in the corner seat. I sat wedged stiffly between two fat citizens and looked out on a flat, hedgeless country of mealie-patches and thin trees. At Pesth was a stream of well-horsed turn-outs going to the races, but I did not see a single motor-car. Perhaps the Hungarians still have that sense of the appropriate which we have lost, and use only horses to take them to their race-meetings and meets of hounds.

As a further example of the parental care for its passengers aforementioned, the railway company has caused to be exhibited in each compartment a brief legend in raised metal letters warning the unwary traveller of the danger of leaning out of the window. This kind thought is expressed in four so-called languages, but has not been done in either English or American. Naturally we each felt slighted at this gross omission, and Skip, as a mark of disapproval, hung half his body out of the

window whenever he saw an official in the corridor. From observation of the other occupants of the train we found that such was the fear of death or mutilation inspired by this notice that the terrible windows were kept fast shut, the heroic passengers being then ready to face suffocation with an easy conscience. Under this system of tender sollicitation it is also impossible for the most helpless voyager to get lost. The chances of his travelling in the wrong train are reduced to nil, for every hour or so, be it day or night, a watchful and loving person with a brass badge and a punch will consent to look at his ticket—even ask for it—and make sure that he is going in the right direction. If the train slowed down a little in the middle of the open country this kind man was round within five minutes in case anyone had scrambled on board.

About half-past nine that night we pulled up at Belgrad, which has a very ordinary-looking station, with no suggestion about it of mediæval luxuries in the way of King-and-Queen-slaying. From here onwards there was an insatiable thirst for passports on the part of fierce, bearded importancies, and the growl of "Passapore" in our sleeping ears became a protracted nightmare. Each sleeping-bunk turned up on a hinge in the wall, and like the chest of drawers in the story

" Contrived a double debt to pay —
A bed by night, a sofa-back by day."

I rigged and climbed to my second-floor dwelling,

but for a long while sleep wooed me not. Apart from the passport fiends, a nasal *Schlummerlied* from my neighbour in the flat below asserted itself too strongly. There is a quality in the Servian snore, whether it be attributable to the *timbre* or the dynamics I know not, that compels, if not admiration, at least attention. The performance was a masterpiece of execution. Opening with a well-marked *largo* theme in the bass, a cross-motive of sniffles and snorts was presently introduced. A resonant bridge-passage connected this with a whistling solo for the right nostril. The original theme was now returned to in *allegro con brio*, and a finely worked up *crescendo* culminated in a grand *fortissimo* grunt. I must confess that the "motive introduced" for the last named was a bulky pocket-book, which descended on the snortophone and brought the oratorio to an abrupt conclusion.

Next morning we were charged two francs for going to sleep, and forty centimes for making up our own bunks. To my great glee the Servian Sonata also had to pay—through the nose—for sleeping on the ordinary seat. After breakfast in the cold early morning at Zaribrod, the Bulgarian frontier, a flat sandy-coloured landscape rolled past, open for a couple of miles from the line, then rising to hills, rocky and bare. Between the small scattered bushes and patches of cultivated land grazed straggling sheep, black or white, and flocks of turkeys in charge of little red-sashed girls; here and there

we passed a detachment of troops beating up the dust of a white road. Presently a soldier boarded the train, and we were able to get an idea of the men we had come to see. I sketched him as he stood in the corridor. A flat, blue-peaked cap set back on a bullety, close-cropped head, thick, low eyebrows, and sharp dark eyes, very serious—suspicious of ill. A spare brown face, short moustache and square chin. A young man—not more than twenty-five—but his face was deeply lined. Crows' feet spread from his eye-corners, and he bore what is common to nearly all these men, a heavy line from nostril to mouth corner, and another parallel behind that. A loose reddish-drab tunic, without buttons, fastened up one side, black belt, and loose trousers tucked into wrinkly boots. Short, sturdy, and a stayer. As I finished my sketch the train slowed down, passengers jostled in the corridor and we ran into an unassuming station.



From mouth to mouth ran the word "Sofia."

CHAPTER II.

In the din of a troubled year.

THE Capital of Bulgaria is young, well grown for its age, and mighty proud of itself. A trifle gawky yet, and having outgrown its clothes a little where its long limbs of electric-tram lines ramble out past scattered, half-built houses to the open country, and suddenly break off, wondering why they have come so far. The town is working all the time, and the main street is positively busy. It has a South of France look; white house-fronts, *persienne* - shuttered windows, and acacia trees shading the buzzing *café*-tables along the footway. Brown and grey-clad troops, officers on curvetting little Hungarian horses, dark-blue Mounted Police, and gay-coloured market-folk with their bullock-carts pass in the roadway; the noise of drums and bugles and the "clang, clang" of electric-tram gongs are in the air.

And at that time there was something electric in the air that had nothing to do with the trams: a feeling that struck the new comer at once—the town vibrated with it—and that was war. Nothing else was talked of in the choked restaurants,



Sofia types.

on the clustered pavements, or in the open streets. Groups of excited men chattered in low, quick speech out of doors ; inside they huddled over the *café*-tables, heads together, hands talking as well as tongues, with suspicious glances at unknown neighbours.

Here were men who could give you twenty sound reasons why there must be war in a week, and you passed in a spirit of elation to others who proved by a score of incontestable arguments that no such thing could happen in the present decade. Newspapers were waved in support of some emphatic prophecy and promptly torn to ribbons by a frenzied opponent in an endeavour to "read between the lines"—certainly at this stage an easy matter.

Armed with a *chit* from a mutual friend setting forth our presumed respectability, we sought out a brother-correspondent, who was engaged in the rather heating occupation of sending red-hot news to a famous paper which likes it frizzling—and if it gets a little "overdone" sometimes, what matter? In the intervals of cook—er—corresponding, he hunted untiringly for aged coins, but even as the news was never new enough to please him, so the money was never old enough, be it never so battered and shapeless. He steered us through the turmoil of the tables, and with many bowings we became known to the great ones of those parts—two Judges, two Colonels and two Doctors. And here let me remark of these honoured titles, that no self-respecting Bulgarian is without one.





The rugged fellows filed past the venerable Father and kissed a little cross which he held up to them.

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The army, of course, was hot for war, and the enthusiasm of our Colonels should have moved any Government to throw down the glove at once. All was ready—troops massed on the frontier, most of the reserves mobilized and the rest coming in; stores on the railways—in fact, barring a slight shortage of rifles (this we learned elsewhere) the military machine was in sound working order, with a great head of steam up, ready for the word “Go.”

Naturally the soldiers were confident, and from what we afterwards saw of them and their organization I think they had good reason to be so. The whole population (with the possible exception of the merchants) was rampant for war. The doings of their Moslem neighbours over the border—the slaughterings and burnings—were nothing new; their own fathers had known that life, and the deep, inborn hate was always there. But Free Bulgaria has grown astoundingly and developed its muscles, and now it saw a chance of hitting back hard enough to hurt. The army went about its business quietly and with a good deal of secrecy. A Regiment of Reserves marched to a siding on the line before dawn the morning after our arrival. An old Exarchate “*pope*” (as their holy men are called) was waked and bidden to come and bless the troops. The rugged fellows filed past the venerable Father and kissed a little cross which he held up to them. Rough and untaught as they were, they knew it was the symbol of what they were going out for, and a tear stood in some of

their sun-wrinkled eyes as they gripped each other by the hand and climbed into the train. Of course there were the women and the youngsters, who have been there every time since first men went to fight.

Rather choky, those little plain Bulgarian women, left out of the calculations in this big, important business of the strife of nations, but showing mostly a straight back-bone, like the sorrow-hardened breed they are.

That afternoon we tried to get a look at Prince Ferdinand, and waited with a camera near the smart, plumed sentries at the Palace gates about the time he was due on his daily drive. But his Highness slipped us and went out by another gate, so we took a stroll through the baking streets. Suddenly, in a side-road, behold the royal escort sitting on their horses under some big trees which shaded the entrance to the royal menagerie and aviary, inside which was the Prince, looking at his birds. And there he stayed most of the afternoon and wore out the patience of two thirsty men who had come fifteen hundred miles to see him, so that they finally retired to seek cold liquids at their *caravanserai*.

Next day my friend the Judge took me to Dr. Tartarcheff, president of the Revolutionary Committee of the Interior, who was good enough to make clear a few of the many hidden things connected with that much-misunderstood organization.

At that time the insurgent bands were harrying the Turk across all Macedonia, controlled, to a



Tartarcheff sat, leaning on his table, and talked quietly.

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large extent, from Sofia. They worked at distances of hundreds of miles apart on a given plan, and arms were distributed to the villagers and general risings brought about to the hour, throughout enormous districts, by the workings of the Exterior Committee—the leaders in the field.

“We have done a great deal this year”—the Doctor spoke in French—“but not a tithe of what we shall do. We are bound to go on so long as we have money and arms—men there will always be. You think it a hopeless task, but you are wrong. Sooner or later—it may be this year or it may be ten years hence—Europe is bound to help us, and until that happens we will stop at nothing. The Macedonians are not fighting for franchise—they are fighting for life.” Tartarcheff sat, leaning on his table, and talked quietly, as a man might explain why he bought a tweed suit instead of a serge one—without particular enthusiasm. It was well covered.

He showed me a copy of the insurgents' newspaper, *L'Autonomie*, a unique thing in journals. The “births, deaths and marriages” column was all deaths, and those of the most violent. The leading article commented on these and set forth a desire to kill and slay in return. The parliamentary news quoted the views of prominent senators on the probability of war. “Country Notes” recounted appalling barbarities inflicted on Christian villagers by the Turks, and the foreign telegrams showed what Europe thought about it. If this little Family Weekly could be translated

into English and sold in the Strand our dear old "Largest Circulation" would have to hide its diminished lists.

I asked after Saráfoff—best known and most active of insurgent leaders—who was at that time undergoing one of his temporary deaths in the newspapers, which published his obituary and revival alternately about once a month. The great little man, it appeared, was not only alive but kicking uncommon hard—pushing about among the Macedonian mountains and intruding on the privacy of the Turkish soldier out of calling hours, in his own unconventional way.

I always used to picture Boris Saráfoff (accent on second syllables) as a big black-bearded brigand with a fierce scowl, in a vague setting of lethal weapons of ancient but uncomfortable design. Some months afterwards, in a Bloomsbury sitting-room, I was introduced to a quiet little brown-faced man with a humorous twinkle in his eye and the Sultan's price on his head, who sat beside me that night at the Palace Theatre laughing at the antics of a couple of knockabouts. The rest of that little party were General Guerdjikoff (an insurgent leader with a big reputation) and Dr. Tartarcheff's brother, who is the Committee's agent in London.

Saráfoff's eye was caught by a mechanical cork-extractor in the bar. "Mais ils ont des machins pour tous—même pour ouvrir les bouteilles!" said he.

His success as a leader is not difficult to under-

Gen. Guertjikoff.

Boris Sarafoff.

Dr. H. Tartakoff.



In a Bloomsbury Sitting-Room.

|

stand. He has a strong personal magnetism, and under his quiet manner and pleasing exterior he conceals a motive power and a tenacity of purpose that have carried him and his men through all their wild times.

The Doctor said, "No war." The Government would not come up to the scratch, and the insurgents would have to do the work by themselves in their own small way. So I went out to find one of those "war-in-a-week" men to talk to and gather consolation.

In the afternoon there was some gun-drill going on at the *Place d'Armes* at which I was not welcomed, so turned to watch a batch of young unbroken cavalry horses being shod. The blacksmith's forge was in a small shed, round which reared and kicked and plunged a dozen embryo chargers, hauling with them clusters of men who clung to reins, ears, mane and tail like hounds pulling down a stag. In front was an equestrian group which might have been carved in stone. Eight men leant inwards upon a young bay horse—motionless. One held its upper lip in the handles of a pair of blacksmith's pincers. Another hauled on a cunning rope-and-ring arrangement which, with one end tied to the tail, hauled the off-hind leg into a handy position for the smith to work upon. The others gripped where they could, and all strained forward, breathing hard, as the smith trotted up with the blue-hot shoe. The little horse, quivering with terror, showed a wild white eyeball and blew noisily through wide-stretched nostrils. As

the shoe sizzled on the pared horn he plunged with a snort and carried his hangers-on half-way round the shed, the blacksmith following with deep roars of Bulgarian blasphemy. The shoeing of a draft of twenty-five, I imagine, is a matter of some weeks.

The cavalry are all horsed from Hungary, and get a capital stamp of animal—the sort we were looking for in South Africa—fourteen-two to fifteen hands, and up to weight. Not that the average Bulgarian is a heavy man, but with his high Russian saddle and big “packs” he needs something sturdy.

By way of plunging into wild dissipation we went that night to a *café-chantant*, and suffered the most lugubrious performance that ever dared to call itself an entertainment. The audience (who had mostly the wisdom to stay away) sat at little tables up the sides of a dismal room and consumed turpentine-and-sugar at the price of *Perrier-Jouet*. To distract their thoughts from this Arcadian draught a succession of ill-balanced females, all too stout or too thin, appeared upon a gaudily-draped platform in dull flannel blouses, and crowed through a jangle of discords hammered out of a lame piano. As each finished her lamentable effort she wandered round the room collecting *sous* from the jays in a tin plate. At the end of twenty minutes, having thoroughly corroded our tongues at the trifling cost of some thirty francs, we tore ourselves from the merry revels, Skip in his disgust being with difficulty restrained from “shooting the lights out.”

The next morning, as none of the papers (contrary to custom) reported that war had been declared during the night, it struck me as a desirable thing to take some bodily exercise in the form of a walk to Dragaleski monastery, said variously to be at two, four and six miles' distance from the hotel. Going into Skip's room to present this proposition, I found him rolled up in his bed-clothes on what looked like a large table upside-down on the floor. This was none other than his bed, right side up but legless. In the silent watches of the night the two lower legs had suddenly crumbled away, leaving the recumbent figure at an angle of thirty. So being a man of resource and prompt action he quietly arose, tore away the two upper legs—thus reducing his bunk to a decorous level—and turned in, all snug and comfy. He did not receive the walk-idea with the enthusiasm the occasion demanded, so I set out alone. Any previous ideas I might have had about the road were washed out and completely effaced by the streams of information poured upon me by the hotel clerk, who, after the manner of his craft, endeavoured to describe two entirely separate routes in alternate breaths, and—most fiendish cunning of all—drew in green pencil a fearsome map, which looked like nothing but the Sultan's signature, on a piece of pink blotting-paper. Refusing this tempting gift I left him, and tramped to the outskirts of the town, where I seized a countryman and repeated "Dragaleski" with solemn emphasis until he pointed out a straggling track. He shouted after me accurate directions,

no doubt full of interest to anyone who understood Bulgarian.

The track went through a barrack-yard across which I was led by half a dozen friendly soldiers all talking at once, and by the time we reached the other gate we were on a footing of life-long comradeship and laughing hugely at each other's jokes (which is often much easier when you don't know what they are). Up a dusty rise, and from the top a clear view over five miles of country to a range of woody hills that grew bigger and bigger as they went back. A darker patch of trees where they joined the plain might be the monastery; nothing else looked like it. The country between was a rolling veldt of bleached grass and sandy earth; here and there a bush and a few cultivated patches towards which my track seemed to lead, but half a mile away it was lost in the plain. A Mounted Policeman cantered past with a puzzled glance at the camera and haversack. With a good breeze behind going was comfortable, and the direction easy enough to keep. The wheel-tracks, spread across a hundred yards of ground, showed that each man chose his own line and drove with the sole idea of making a point. Now and then the lines collected to cross a boggy bit, like a field of sportsmen cramming through a gateway, and promptly spread fanwise again. Bye and bye some white houses could be made out among the leaves ahead, and a stunted church-spire roughly tiled.

The belt of trees materialised into a plum-orchard heavy with blue fruit and bordered by a stream

running a great pace, in which two or three women were washing clothes. Their heads were covered with white kerchiefs and two wore sheepskin jackets. All had narrow blue petticoats and the native skin sandals laced with crossed thongs. They were not beautiful; indeed, I have seen very few Bulgarian peasant-women who were not extremely plain. They have mostly shrewd and kindly faces, though, and are wonderful workers, eminently useful at the few things they know. The village was spread about among the trees, each house standing in its own grounds, as the advertisement says. Little one-storied places with white-washed walls and red, overhanging roofs. Spying a table and stools outside one of them, I tackled a small boy in the doorway, and demanded food with gestures representing vigorous mastication. He was thoroughly scared and ran bawling into the house, but his mother had an instinctive knowledge of the sign language and the wants of wanderers, and produced some of the native sheep's-milk cheese which I afterwards grew to know well and value exceedingly. To the ignorant eye it seems nothing but a lump of wet white chalk, but fresh and in good condition it equals many a proud home product at fifteen pence a pound. Five farthings is the native price. With this, the good brown country bread and home-made red *vino*, a hungry man can do well.

Then came a couple of voluble engineers who talked in French and were laying a conduit from a mountain stream to Sofia; but I had not come

out to see waterworks, so wished them all luck with their pipe and pushed on up the hill to the monastery. Out in the open I met their stream, harnessed long ago by the natives into old hollow tree-trunks, laid lip to lip on rough stone-piles, with the water tearing and splashing through them like a mill-race. And these people in squash hats and little black ties were going to take it out of its old familiar tree-trunks and run it through a vile iron drain.

Over the hazel-trees ahead the monastery walls came into view like some old fortress, with little windows peeping high up along the top of them. The wind blew heartily, and the branches whipped and whistled to the rustling of the brown leaves as I climbed round the foot of the walls and found the ancient gateway with its high wooden gates open. At the top of the sloping courtyard, past a white chapel and little low-roofed house, stood a long two-storied building, white, with a brown wooden gallery running along its upper story, and a dark-red roof like the rest. I turned to the low house and stooped through a dark doorway.

Inside was smoke—thick, stinging and impenetrable. Presently a dim light took the shape of a small open window, then a little flame showed on the floor, and gradually, as a dark scene on a stage slowly reveals itself, appeared the figure of a man bending over a wood fire in a great black stone chimney with rough wooden pillars rising round him, and a big cooking-pot hanging from a beam. Barrel-ends stuck out of black niches in



Cooking supper, Dragaleski.

the chimney wall, and round the fire two or three hens pecked about in a jumble of big stones, pine-branches and iron cooking-stools. The floor was hard-beaten earth, out of which blackened pillars rose in odd places to mysterious beams above. The acrid smell of wood smoke pricked the nostrils as it tried to escape through a tiny hole in the roof. towards which the sides of the great chimney leaned, but the wind drove it down until some of it found its way out through the doorway and the tiny window. The man, in sheepskin coat and fur cap, offered his visitor a footstool, but by this time the visitor's eyes were smarting intolerably and he retired, to stand blinking in the courtyard whilst the wind blew the smoke out of them. By degrees the atmosphere cleared, and I accepted the rickety footstool, which had been built, with patient ingenuity, so that it should not stand up. However, with a stone and great caution I kept it on its pins for half an hour, and sketched the rugged chimney. Then a dark, burly figure appeared in the doorway and a round, grey-bearded face under the chimney hat of the Exarchate Church smiled over my shoulder at the sketch-book.

How can I describe thee, O! most worthy monk? Thine old rough-cut and kindly face, eyes of light-blue with a twinkle intensified by the deep crows' feet at the knowing corners; thy grand and honourable beard, spreading its iron-grey curls across a broad black chest—or would-be black, for thine ancient cassock had faded under many a summer sun and winter rain. Its green, uncertain edge

flapped round thy broad half-boots in old and unmistakable familiarity.

We had, perhaps, six words in common, and those German ; but what need to talk with such a man ? The bright flame of charity and true hospitality burned within him, and he read each idea as if formed, like a yeoman-of-signals reading the rolled flags as they go aloft, not yet broken out. And how did he convey to me, later, that my supper would be ready in an hour, and that meanwhile I could walk round and look at this quaint little town of his, a hundred yards broad ? Frankly I do not know, but remember that it was all clear. I went up into the woods and looked down on the red roofs, whilst a string of labouring buffaloes slowly hauled their screaming waggons up the track, and a wizened shepherd drove his bony flock within the walls.

Great rolls of dark, forbidding cloud came over the setting sun and spread across the sky. The last waggon stopped its screeching and the last sheep straggled in as the chapel bell began to swing in the wooden tower, and as it settled to a steady "tang-tang, tang-tang," the old tottering gates were shut-to for the night. Now the sullen clouds were overhead, and on to the dry leaves fell the first big drops of a heavy rain.

I slipped back through a postern door in the west wall and sat under a little thatched shelter outside the old house, smoking a pipe and watching the raindrops forming little dusty globes in the thick dust of the courtyard. Just as the ground had all

turned brown and slimy came a mighty slap on the knee, and there was that benevolent old face saying "supper," plainer than speech. I followed his broad back through low, skull-cracking doorways and dark passages till we came into a lighted room. No — surely not a room — a chapel! Perhaps twenty feet by ten, and evidently no longer used for its real purpose. The floor at the east end was a few inches higher and had a short barrier at the "break" of it. Under the broad east window, where the altar must sometime have been, was a couch, and along the side-wall a table with white cloth spread ready for a meal. Above this, in a round-topped niche stood a statuette of the Virgin Mary, round the feet of which withered flowers clung and tin ornaments glinted. An oak-panelled confessional filled the other end, with blue and gold paper above it to the ceiling.

In came my cook-man with a great steaming bowl of *tchorba*—the native soup—thick, red, and very filling. A bottle of what Father Benvolio called *Schnapps* was on the table. Would he drink a glass with me? To be sure he would; so I filled him a bumper, and there, in that strangest of dining-rooms, we clinked glasses and pledged each other jovially, and I swear I waited for him to break into the Abbot's song from *La Poupee*.

But instead he broke into the confessional and lugged out from its recesses blankets and sheets and a pillow, explaining in his wonderful way that they were his own, and therefore quite safe. These he spread on the couch, and left me. May

he live long to trundle round the village in his old wide boots, for he was one of the best.

The wind battered the wet branches against the east window, and now and again a thresh of rain crossed it and showered the floor through a broken pane. The chapel was on the outer wall, and I could hear between the blasts the splash of water a hundred feet below. As I turned in and put out the smoky old lamp a couple of rats scampered along the skirting-board; but the couch was as comfortable as any spring bed, and I never slept more soundly.

In the morning it was still raining heavily, so after a cup of coffee in the Black Place I started on a run for the village, and was lucky enough to find a wandering carriage leaving empty for Sofia.

Skip was playing Patience, and life was for a space bound up in making the game "pan out." This done, I learned that there had been a brush between the Bulgars and Turks at a frontier post near Kustendil. "Three cheers for the gallant post-men, and long might they continue brushing!" Maps were hauled out, and the coin-collector called to a great war-*indaba*, at which it was proposed, seconded, and carried *nem. con.* "that the present company do put themselves with all dispatch into such vehicle, conveyance or other canasmus as shall most abruptly deliver them at the scene of the aforesaid brush."

"And plenty of bristle to it," added Skip, putting on his disreputable straw hat at a determined angle.

CHAPTER III.

Wards of the Outer March.

SUN, dust, grilling heat and a crowd of perspiring countryfolk ; train-whistles, shouts, and the neighing of horses. We slung out of a stuffy train which had climbed laboriously for four hours to Radomir station—two huts at the end of the branch line. It was market-day at the village a couple of miles away, and the ground was paved with baskets and bundles, bouquets of chickens tied together by the legs, and man-traps of long-handled hoes. Boring through the odorous crowd—why will they wear sheep-skins in such heat?—we discovered in a maze of bullock-carts the crazy shandrydan bespoken the day before in Sofia, and sent on to meet us. In shape it resembled a Paris *fiacre* of great age and infirmity, its loose-jointed frame held together by knots of rope, and the aggregate of ailments possessed by the four sullen nags which drew it might have been lifted wholesale from a vet.'s list. These sorrow-stricken Gallo-ways leaned against each other in a row with closed eyes, snatching a moment of repose before their thirty-mile flight. Our only excuse for hiring them was that all the others were worse.

On the box (so called) sat a swarthy ruffian who wore a drooping cigarette on his left ear and eyed us with disfavour. All being ready, he plucked from under him an awesome flail, and with a whoop that raised the birds, laid a succession of trip-hammer blows on the backs of the sleeping beauties. In one bound they were at full gallop, hurling themselves on three legs apiece through the crowd of waggons and wayfarers, with clashing bell-necklaces. Just as each of us had discovered something to hold on by we stopped suddenly in the village, where the Oof-bird, with the eye of an eagle swooping on its prey, dived into some mysterious purlieu in search of coins, leaving his travelling mates to sit and roast in the hard-seated conveyance.

Through the heat-shimmer of the sleepy street plodded a yoke of oxen with a high-piled wagon of hay. Round about were queer little wood-walled hovels with half-open fronts. A baker sat on a counter, under his wooden-flap awning, arranging flat brown loaves; opposite, a harness-maker pulled down an ox-yoke from his dangling stock-in-trade to haggle over with a fur-capped peasant. Suddenly a cavalry patrol turned the corner and jingled past at a trot in a cloud of choking dust.

"Snakes, man!" observed Skip, waking out of a doze. "I'd forgotten all about this old war. Wonder if those fellas know anything?" But we were powerless to ask, so dozed for twenty grilling minutes till the family-coach lurched

dangerously as the Oof-bird bounded in, disgust writ large upon his face. "Shah!" he growled, "I've been wasting my time." The two baked bodies whose time did not count made room, the trip-hammer descended again, and we were off for the frontier.

The surface of that road was calculated to smash an ordinary farm cart to splinters, but there was a sort of give-and-take about our miraculous rattletrap which allowed it to pass whole over the rocks and pits of which this important highway was constructed. It was continually climbing and descending steep hills, but on the scarce levels between we had time to look at a fine country. Sweeps of veldt-like sunburned land running back, bare and empty, to the foot-hills a couple of miles away. Gradually these closed in till we were rattling up a valley that might be Swaledale, only the oaks and beeches, thick on the hillsides, are about half the size of the Yorkshire trees. Below, among grey boulders, ran a stream that looked like trout, with good green turf along its sides. The hills opened out again, and heavy-laden plum-trees stood up over the big thistles and bramble bushes on the roadside banks. Blue-backed magpies searched the rye-stubbles; bright blue and orange moths danced above them. As we tramped through the dust of a stiff up-grade the little lizards darted across the baking rocks to hide in the cracks. Over all the fierce sun, which made climbing in English tweeds something of a labour.

The swarthy Jehu, who now bore by common

consent the name of Antonio, showed a marked distaste for this hill-walking, answering the loud commands to "Get down" by an active and engrossing pantomime representing the process of a deadly combat, and the receipt by himself of a painful wound in the right thigh. The Oof-bird's gestures promising the infliction of an equally grave injury to the left limb, however, brought him to earth; but, to do him justice, it was only when the rats bolted with the trap that he forgot the limp and pursued them with the speed of a mountain hare. He was really a wonderful whip, and his handling of those four cripples on the awkward down-grades would have turned Joe Selby green with envy. He would pause on the top as one hangs at the dead point of a swing—and with the same sensation—then let go with the swoop of a vulture down a twisting mountain road where we swayed between pulverization on the bare rock on the one side, and a sheer drop to perdition on the other. In full flight he would rip across six loose gaping planks over some hideous abyss, whilst an instant vision of one of those rattling feet put wrong sent iced electricity down the spine. Far sooner would I loop the loop on a hand-barrow than sit again behind that demon driver, gripping a rotten strap as my last chance of life. When we arrived with a bump on the plain we mopped our



"ANTONIO"

brows and said it was exhilarating. So, I daresay, is a jump off the top of the Tower Bridge.

The sun was going down as we clattered up the cobbled street of Kustendil, its minarets standing out of a jagged line of roofs, deep purple against the glow.

The little inn, two-storied and white-faced, was a type of any other in the country. The wide street door opens into a long, low room with white-washed walls, on which hang at different angles an oleograph of Prince Ferdinand and a print of some smoke-enveloped battle between Bulgars and Turks. A miniature billiard-table stands among its domestic brethren in the middle of a rough wood floor, and in the corner a bar, shelves and counter piled with fruit and crockery. This is the landlord's habitation, from which he seldom emerges. He allows himself a brief outing to greet honoured guests, and now advanced with smiles and bowings. Having responded in kind we fell upon a huge dish of grapes.

Two local cronies of the Oof-bird's presently arrived—need I say a Judge and a Doctor?—who spoke a mutual tongue and were promptly beset for news. The frontier, they thought, had reassumed such calm as it usually enjoyed, and the promising "brush" had failed to sweep down the line and raise the dust of warfare. Still, that same dust was of the nature of a trail of gunpowder, and a spark might start it. Every day more troops were quietly pushing up towards the border—we had passed a couple of batteries in camp by the roadside—and all things were possible.

By dinner time the room was filled with officers and local people, government contractors, and newspaper correspondents, and loud was the clatter of strange tongues round the long table. Confining ourselves to the less dangerous-sounding preparations on the *menu* we did well, and after a game of billiards—in which the great thing was to keep your ball out of the hole in the middle of the table—we climbed to our bedroom. Owing to a crowded house I was to share my room with a burly Colonel, but what a small share was mine I did not realise until I awoke after ten minutes' sleep, with a growing conviction that that room was one of the most thickly populated in Europe. The human inhabitant of the other bed—curses on his thick skin—snored like a hog, whilst I waged a hopeless war by candle-light.

A cold dawn found me dozing on a blanket on the floor, and the rhinoceros-hide Bulgar dressing with irritating energy.

“Aha!” says he, “vous dormez à la militaire?”

“Yes,” I answered, “the bed was occupied.”

“How occupied?”—his eyes opened wide. I explained in a word, and from the way the creature laughed you might have supposed it was a joke.

Skip and the Oof-bird had enjoyed an untroubled night, and consequently I felt towards them that unreasoning grudge always harboured by the sleepless towards their more lucky companions. The Oof-bird had as usual been out on his consuming quest, and discovered before breakfast a coin of the most fabulous age and illegibility, which pro-

duced in him the effusive gaiety and loquacity of a hen with a new-laid egg. At 8.30 Antonio, who had been bidden to appear with the "barouche" at eight o'clock, was summoned and interviewed, by the aid of the Judge.

"Yes, everything was ready for a start, but there were still a few unimportant trifles to be done."

A visit to the stable-yard revealed the dusty vehicle, untouched since last night, and the four prize animals, unadorned, crunching wiry hay in the stable. We overturned the vials of wrath on the complacent Jehu and turned to inspect a "horse" ordered the night before, on which I proposed to ride to the frontier post of Guishevo.

It was a grand up-standing animal of nearly twelve hands high, that is to say (to the unlearned in horse-measurement) about up to a big man's waist. Over it towered an erection of great leather flaps and stuffing, culminating in two horse-hair sofa cushions between which the rider was supposed to wedge himself, the whole being known as a Russian saddle. The pony's spindly legs were finished off with donkey-hoofs, and it looked up to about seven stone with a light racing saddle. Its owner, however, swore by his grandmother's beard that the stalwart beast would treat my twelve-stone-seven with amused contempt, and with the example of our four-in-hand in mind I agreed to put its sense of humour to the test.

By this time a gentleman temporarily attached to our retinue as interpreter had shown up. He was a

most amiable person with a beautiful black beard, but as he only spoke French, at which neither of his carriage-companions were great hands, their journey promised to be a somewhat silent one. In due time an uproar in the stable-yard announced the starting of our team, which came limping and jangling round to the door, Antonio making a great show with the flail. With Bulgarian punctuality we started at nine, only an hour late. I mounted my pocket Pegasus, wedged myself between the horrible cushions, and with my toe-tips in a pair of child's stirrups, started after the party at a *staccato* semi-quaver trot.

From Kustendil to the frontier at Guishevo is about fourteen miles, over a road originally paved with foot-square blocks of stone, which now stuck out of the dust at all angles. Pear-trees and vines here took the place of the plums, and we were soon hard at work on a free fruit breakfast of the finest. A little way out lay a regiment of Reserves in camp, under rows of what Skip calls "dog-tents"—a length of canvas flung across a horizontal pole and pegged down at the sides, which are neatly turfed to keep out the draught. Inside is a thick layer of straw, on which there is room enough for three men to lie side-by-side. They were serving out the day's bread-ration—flat brown loaves with string-coloured crumb, of capital quality. These and the universal *tchorba* soup are what they live on, and the stiff and wiry look of the men shows how well it agrees with them. They swarmed out to the roadside ditch to look at us—men of all

ages, from the wrinkle-faced peasant of forty-five to the short-service man of half his age. The older men, called back to the ranks after fifteen years of farm life, wore their coffee-coloured uniform slouchily, and some of them "stood over" a little at the knees, but the others were well-set-up, determined-looking fellows. All had a certain air of usefulness, and there was not a stupid face



'A grinning peasant.'

amongst them. They wore thick white flannel leggings, some with elaborate braidings and broad black bands criss-crossing over them. The leather-thonged cowskin slippers of the Balkan peasant were universal—only the Line are served out with boots.

A mile or two further on a grinning peasant showed us a little white house and a low cottage, which had for long been the sheltering place of Dr. Romanoff and his band of insurgents.*

The proclamation of martial law in the district a couple of days before was the signal for their flitting, and they vanished into the hills. In this dark grimy hovel they sat on the uneven earth floor discussing their plans for the discomfiting of the Turks, and here they manufactured the dynamite bombs that have established such a terror in the

* Photo, p. 46.

heart of the Moslem, whilst the women pounded the butter in their queer-shaped churns. These are like a very tall wooden bucket, narrowing towards the top, in which they puddle with a wooden staff.

Another hour's travelling through a flat country brought us to a little hamlet at the foot of the frontier range, from which the road to the top shot up abruptly. Here was a convenient rest house—what the Turks call a *Khan** the owner providing shelter but no food. Being forewarned we had brought our own, but as knives and forks were unheard of sat down and rent a cold chicken limb from limb with pocket-knives and fingers. It was here that I determined to get rid of the "Slav" element in my saddle, and soon discovered a buckle which, when loosed, freed the diabolical cushions from their resting place. This unorthodox proceeding was met by the strong disapproval of Antonio, but I stuffed the offensive things into the box of the shandrydan. Though shorn of its chief glory the saddle was now more adapted for human use. The only creature which could have bestrode it with any comfort in its early stage is a monkey. The Black Rat so far had gone surprisingly well, though not, towards mid-day, with the flippancy of the first few miles.

To the guard-post on the crest of the hill was about two miles of very stiff climbing for horses, so we left Antonio and his charges to follow at their leisure, bringing with them in lordly state

* Pronounced "hahn."

the interpreter, who politely demurred when the project of going up on foot was mooted. The sun beat straight down on the unshaded road as the three tramps plodded dustily upwards in shirt-sleeves, the Rat — coat-laden — following obediently. Half-way up the carriage passed us with its tender load lolling under an umbrella and complacently stroking its silky beard. Antonio, having caught the spirit of the thing, was walking of his own accord some little way behind. We sat down for a minute on the bank, and were hazily calling to mind the French for “lazy swab” when the team bore away a couple of points towards the side of the road where the turf dropped almost sheer to the bottom of the hill. The near fore wheel rose over the low bank, Antonio jumped forward with a blood-curdling yell—the umbrella rose in the air, and the form of the linguist translated itself to the road with a bound. He walked to the top.

Turning an upward corner we came suddenly upon a little low white block-house, in front of which stood a Bulgarian sentry leaning on a bayonnetted *Männlicher*. As the man questioned us a blinking brown face looked out, disappeared again, and out straggled the guard. They made no attempt to fall in, but hung round whilst we enquired for the officer commanding the post. By ill luck he was absent, and without him no man might pass over the imaginary but important line to visit the Turks in their little similar white house forty yards away. Outside it their blue-clad, red-fezzed

sentry paced slowly, and three or four figures strolled out, squatting in the shade of the loop-holed wall to examine the strangers. Behind them the oak-covered hump of a hill rose, and away across the valley to the south towered the bare heights of their first line of defence. If I had been allowed then a peep into the future, I might



have seen myself, a few months later, dodging about those same hills chased by the Turkish police.

Along the crest past us wound a foot-path north-westward to another Turkish guard-house. Down this through the short oak scrub came presently five or six men in single file on their way to relieve guard.

They swaggered by within a couple of yards of us led by a short, lithe, hawk-nosed man whose white cap stamped him an Albanian. A broad red sash, cartridge belt buckled over it, covered all but the butt and muzzle of a gigantic silver-plated revolver. On one shoulder he carried jauntily his short blue jacket and a Martini-Henry rifle. He glared evilly from under his scowling black brows. It appeared that we were honoured by being taken for leaders of the Macedonian Committees, and nothing would have pleased these warriors better than to get to work on us with their Martinis. Having watched them safely off the premises it occurred to Skip and myself to take a walk through the oak trees and reconnoitre the Turks' stronghold on the hill, so off we started. The sergeant of the guard was not so minded, and presently a soldier, followed by the panting man-of-tongues, arrived at the double to hale us back. But the Bulgarian "Tommy," like his British brother, is an obliging fellow, and we went on. He said it was the head-gear that put the Turks off, in particular my tweed cap, which only insurgents wear in that part of the world. The idea of swopping caps did not appeal to the soldier, however, and we had to be content with crouching in the bushes, cap in hand, fifty yards from the guard-house. There was not much to be seen of it, but sufficient for the interpreter was the proximity thereof. On the way back I took a photograph in which you see the Oof-bird considering the possibility of hidden treasure, and one of the guard coming to move us further into



An Insurgents' Haunt and the Frontier Post at Guishevo.

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1

Bulgaria. A little notice board—"Passengers are requested not to cross the line"—could be done quite cheaply and might avert possible death by lead-puncture. The grey-eyed sergeant—a man of much responsibility who carried it well—could hold out no hopes of his officer's return before dark. Alarm fires had been lit the night before in the Turkish valley, and firing had been heard to the westward, so the Captain had gone out to investigate. The famous brush had happened in that direction too, and the sergeant and his men had only had to stand by and wait for whatever luck they might have.

"Ah! the Turks over the way here?"—he smiled tolerantly—"Not bad fellows, but impatient—impatient. They shall have their beating, all in good time, you know—all in good time."

So here at least was no war. Antonio was dragged blinking from the depths of the guard-house, and a brawny soldier-lad led out the Rat—perhaps he did not often see silver, but it is rather a queer sensation for a man to kiss one's hand. Jogging quietly down the hill I watched the rattletrap disappear round the corner like a streak and thanked my stars I was not in it.

We made Kustendil by sunset, and the Rat, to his everlasting credit, finished strong. Foregoing the temptations of the "middle pocket" billiard table, we held solemn conclave after dinner and decided to push on to Dubnitza, *en route* for Samakov, both frontier towns to the south-eastward. Certainly trouble was a long time coming, but

the Army, to judge by its representatives at Kustendil, was full of hope.

After dark an infantry escort marched silently past with half-a-dozen refugees who had just come in over the border. As these slouched by in the dim light of the soldiers' lantern, one of them plucked the hated *fez* from his head and flung it into the gutter with a hoarse chuckle.

CHAPTER IV.

. . . hearked to rumour, and snatched at a breath,
Of 'this one knoweth' and 'that one saith,—

A COUNTRY with the prospect of immediate war hanging over it is generally supposed to show some signs of disquiet or unusual stir. Not so our placid Bulgaria. At night, sure enough, the existence of martial law turned all civilians indoors by eight o'clock, but by day—beyond running across a cavalry patrol or an infantry camp now and then—you could wander the country through and never suspect the finger on the trigger at Headquarters. The stolid tillers of the soil did not concern themselves with affairs of state. If there was to be a war, well and good; but there was no reason why the cows should not be driven out to graze in the morning and all the other little daily doings gone through, as they had been for a life long. So Ivan keeps his eyes for his own job, and gathers his fruit-harvest or follows his mild-eyed buffaloes down the road as untroubled as they.

The ceremony of departure in these parts is a heavy one, entailing on the traveller the consumption of a mystic drink known as *Slivovitz* (the

spelling must take its chance), in quantities according to the number of friends who share the sweet sorrow of parting. The stuff itself is a sort of plum-gin, colourless and very potent. The act of paying the bill produces a tray of it in little glasses at the personal expense of the landlord, and after the warriors, law-givers, and medicine-men on the premises have wreaked their hospitality on the wanderer, he finally escapes to his conveyance, content to watch the world go by, and with no desire whatever to walk up hills.

Antonio, in the blatant glory of a new snuff-coloured great-coat, put on an insufferable swagger until the cobbles of the town gave place to the easy dust of the country road, when the gorgeous garment was hidden reverently away. Along a wide valley we trundled, making out the Radomir road trailing up the distant hills on the left like a piece of white cotton. Over the banks the thick vines spread and crossed from row to row of sticks, half-hiding blue bunches of little grapes ; on the other side, pears in ripe clusters hung out over the road invitingly. Standing on the seat we pulled these down in handfuls, whilst Antonio with native cunning plunged deep into the vineyard for grapes untouched by the dust of the road, which powdered everything for twenty yards back. Under the same old burning sun we travelled, coatless, on and on, whilst the bees buzzed round and the dust settled quietly on everything, covering all as the sand covers a ruined sea-castle. At a bend of the road lay a colour-picture that will stick in my mind's

eye always. A broad cabbage-patch of gorgeous purple dotted with orange-coloured flowers; in the midst a boy with orange flower in cap and bright red sash; behind him a white-washed house, red-roofed; green plants, sandy hill, and turquoise sky. Everything was in its place—there was nothing wanting. It was the most perfect nature-picture you could wish to see, and I have never spoilt the memory of it by trying to paint it.

Now and again we left the road and silently rolled and swayed over the bleached grass to cut off a corner. Then a "sloosh" as the wheels sank in a grey bog-patch, and the squashy, sucking sounds of sixteen legs pulling out of the deep slime. In one of these crossings was a country waggon, two wheels fast bedded in the mud and its load of corn sacks all slid over to the sunken side. In it stood an old wizened man holding with one hand to a corner-post and prodding the straining buffaloes with a long pole. The more they hauled, the deeper went the buried wheels, and further sagged the heavy sacks till the crazy side-rail creaked under them. Pulling up on the sound going, Antonio arose and yelled advice with much instructive gesture, till the old man, dropping his pole, grabbed his sacks and hauled them one by one on to the upper rail. As we left him his slanting floor was slowly levelling up on to dry land.

At midday we "outspanned" by a running stream under a wide acacia tree, and, stretched in the shade, watched the water flowing clear over yellow sand. A herd of swine, followed by a little

bare-foot girl, turned off the road and ploughed through the sand with inquisitive gruntings, jostling each other into the water. Their little herd-woman, grave with the responsibilities of her office, turned her shy dark eyes on the queer-looking strangers under the tree. Her white

kerchief glared the whiter against the clear tan of her shaded face. She paddled down stream, cooling her dusty feet and kicking the water playfully on to a straggling pig.



Then came a string of pack-ponies, with wooden "hen-coop" saddles reaching right over the withers, and brown rugs covering the piled merchandise under a network of cross-cording. Beside them strode long spare men of the hill-breed in blanket kilts edged with black braid. Some of their leather belts had a wallet in front with a flap cover, from under which stuck out the ornamented

handle of a long knife. Striding big and steady, these hardy rovers cover incredible distances with their pack-trains between dawn and dark, doing most of the carrying trade of the hill districts and those parts of the interior which have never heard a railway-whistle.

For one still hour under the acacia the panorama of peace passed by, whilst the team kicked at the

flies and crunched their feed of corn from a rug on the ground. In all that day's trekking there was no sign of the cloud which overhung the country. All was calm, and quiet daily labour.

In the afternoon we rolled across an old Turkish bridge called *Khadym Most*, over the wide and shallow Struma river. *Khadym* is the Turk's name for the most beautiful woman in the *harem*, so it might be translated "beautiful bridge." A fine old grey structure, and an important strategic point on this main road to the capital.*

Four o'clock found us taking the boulders of Dubnitza main street at the pulverising gallop reserved by Antonio for such occasions, which effectively shook the dust from the racked shandrydan and its bouncing hangers-on. No sooner were we inside the inn door than crowds of men, who all seemed to know us, came and clacked like looms without ceasing. Once again war and rumours of war. A village over the border sacked and burned, and the villagers straggling in by hundreds over the Rilo range to the monastery and the neighbouring towns. Insurgents and Turks hard at it, hammer-and-tongs; the Bulgars outnumbered and retiring on the border-line, or the Turks caught in an ambush and treated with great slaughter. War to be declared at once—they had it on the highest authority. A subaltern who had come in that very afternoon with the cavalry had seen a man who was reported to have said, etc., etc.

*Photo, page 56.

Among those whose *rôle* was to know more than they would say was one who stood out as an evident past-master of the art of wink-and-nod. He spoke American with a Bulgarian accent and introduced himself as a *dragoman* moving in the highest circles. This lofty profession apparently entailed the most strenuous physical exertion, as its present ornament's garments were rudely over-used and his collar of that subtle grey hue obtained by a long estrangement from the wash-tub. In his moments of leisure, he explained, it gave him peculiar pleasure to offer his great store of knowledge to any Americans or English he should happen to meet. He loved America as his own home, and the qualities of the Anglo-Saxon race appealed to him irresistibly. By a slight oversight he allowed his drink to go on our bill and accompanied us into the street, where in the space of one minute he pointed out the Post-office, the barber's, the barracks, the town-hall, the best hatter's and the worst *café*, with a wealth of detail that commanded the admiration, if it slightly fogged the mind, of his convoy.

In the mysterious way known to his craft he divined the Oof-bird's great mission, and led him, with solemn winks of deep portent, to where should be revealed "the mammoth coin collection of this country, I tell you." Switching his attention back to Skip and myself his beard wagged down one smelling alley and up another until in a crowded half-hour I knew far more of Dubnitza than I do of any place I ever lived in. Slipping and



He read, on one note, the proclamation of Martial Law.

tripping over the great ankle-twisting cobbles of its dirty streets, we searched its dozens of potter's shops for anything original in design or work. Terra-cotta jugs, jars and pots covered the walls and the open fronts, but nothing could the grinning men-of-thumbs show that would be worth the carrying off. On the hatters' boards sat the round native fur hats on little brass blocks like squat coffee-pots, with a handle sticking out underneath. The temptation to wear a fur hat under that sun was easily overcome.

Skip, reckless as ever, plunged into the barber's darksome haunt and came out unrecognizable, followed by a hairy man demanding more money. Outside the hotel was a thin youth in short trousers beating a side-drum, to the roll of which came everyone within hearing, and stood round the drummer in an attentive ring. The children, inside the circle, held each other's hands and stared hard, whilst the sheepskin-coated women and old men (most of the young ones were out with the "bands") exchanged ideas as to what it was all about. Round the crowd hovered a few infantrymen and one of the Mounted Police. The crier stopped his drumming and pulled out a long paper, from which he read, on one note, the proclamation of Martial Law. The official voice and its message seemed to bring home future possibilities to the people, and the gathering broke up talking gravely. The women took their children by the hand and led them home, showing in their own faces a feeling of insecurity.



Khadym Most.

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Having dressed for dinner (*i.e.* got out a clean handkerchief) we took seats at the banquet board. Here appeared a rubber-faced linguist about five feet high, who translated the *menu* and announced: "I am Russian officer and editor of influenceable military newspaper. I wrote also important book on the Russian-Indian question—frontier of the Himalayas range, you see. It has been greatly sold." The literary warrior beamed over a pale goatee beard, and wore with conscious pride a small star hanging out of the collar of his frock coat. He would like me to push the epoch-making treatise in London, and no doubt I could get it translated. I told him I felt flattered but far from hopeful, whereat he fell upon the Oof-bird and confided to him a secret about the "Russian-Indian question" of such scorching novelty that for five fiery minutes the correspondent's professional blood boiled within him, and he doubled out to the Post-office to flash the great news across Europe.

The cosmopolitan *dragoman* seemed to have formed an undying attachment for us, and in honour of his adhesive qualities was surnamed "the Barnacle." It was his desire to accompany us for the rest of our journey. The price per day for the monopoly of his talents was, he knew, ridiculous by the light of their unique brilliancy, but for people he took a fancy to no sacrifice was too great. We felt we could not allow him to make it.

For Antonio, the desire to dazzle the eyes of his Sofia admirers with the new coat had overwhelmed

every other, and he was paid off. With the aid of seven men talking four languages, temporary rights were acquired in a local framework on wheels and three equine mummies on the sworn undertaking of their proprietor that they were capable of hauling the same. Then wearily to bed.

An outside staircase from the yard led to the bedroom, and its window looked out on to a wooden balcony occupied by a flock of geese which flapped and cackled to the banishment of all sleep. In due time from Skip's bed came a muffled voice—"Say, you fellas, why don't you chase those dam ducks out o' that?"

"Your job," yawned the Oof-bird; "you two both nearer the window than I am."

"If I move," said I, "this rickety bed of mine'll fall to pieces. Go on, one of you." Here ensued a mighty tramping on the staircase as half a dozen men advanced and drove the geese shrieking into the yard. But the cure was worse than the disease, for the new flock brought chairs, sat down on the balcony, and held a heated revolutionary meeting.

We woke to find Dubnitza in the throes of market-day, and after the solemn rite of *Slivovitz* had been celebrated, bored our way out of the town through a close-packed mob of ponies, oxen, waggons, sheep, fruit-stalls and some hundreds of queer-looking beings. Not least of these was our new driver, a person of most villainous countenance and a wall-eye. He was swathed from arm-pits to thighs in enough red cloth to carpet

the aisle of The Abbey, in the folds of which was concealed everything he owned.

Past the barracks and cavalry lines, where rows of smart little horses were being vigorously groomed, and out over a stout stone bridge. About a mile down the road the trouble began.



The mummies were not "for it," a shambling run of ten yards or so being as much as they could manage at a time. Skip, mounting the box, seized the whip and whaled them with all-embracing sweeps. Twice in twenty yards the driver's fur cap spun from his head into the dust, and the long

lash accurately picked out the faces of the unhappy inside passengers. However, the beasts woke up a little, and under continued treatment maintained a steady average of three miles an hour as far as a little roadside inn. Here Skip with streaming face threw the broken whip in the road and rested from his labours.

The ugly jarvey stood himself a drink, which so emboldened him that he came out with the entire staff of the place and refused to go any further. He seemed nettled at having had to accept help with his team, but to show him the folly of hypersensitiveness about details I gave him a healthy shaking and left him on the box in a dazed frame of mind. The local people, who had at first got up a sort of indignation meeting on his behalf, now laughed it off and played the part of onlookers in the doorway. "Ugly" soon decided on "*better go forward and die,*" and a little way up the road cut himself a faggot of stout ash staves with which he made strong play, the passengers taking reliefs of walloping by his side.

This day hills abounded, and the last hour before the midday halt was one long climb. Thick woods covered the hillsides, and sometimes the footpath led through them in the welcome cool. At the summit we sat on benches under a little plank shelter devouring hard-boiled eggs, and watching a bevy of starved hens fighting for the shells. A high wind blew across the path and whisked off the hay on which the mummies were browsing, so that "Ugly" and the landlord of the *buvette* were legging after

it all the time. Then the hay blew over the hens and the men fell over the hay and the dust rose over them all ; and a kicking, swearing, clucking scrimmage raged in the highway. In the middle of it all the hen-owner trod on the horse-owner's fingers—I think on purpose—and the concentrated wickedness of all the fiends of hell twisted into " Ugly's " demon face. I saw myself in a vision driving the caravan into Samakov with the landlord's body, and the driver, trussed with his own sash, on the seat beside it. But the landlord, with the wisdom of blue funk, skipped behind our table and fussily jingled the glasses with an eye on the aggrieved haymaker, who glowered and fingered his carpet cummerbund with a wealth of " pointed " suggestion.

We let him stand out in the breeze for a while to cool off before starting on the long down-grade to Samakov. No need for the hedge-stakes here—the old barrow wagged and sagged through the dust, shoving the stiff'uns in front of it a good deal faster than they liked, and at half-past three they brought up, all sitting, at the lofty portals of the *Hôtel Bulgaria*.

The place was empty—not a Doctor, a Judge or a Colonel in sight. In this grave state of affairs the first thing to be done was to hire a *prevotchek*, otherwise interpreter. A Jew draper, bearing the honoured name of Koyoundjiski, volunteered for this post, and proved the most useful man of his craft I ever talked through. He could reel off French, Spanish, Bulgarian, German or Turkish one

after the other or side by side, and unlike most of his kind did not carry on long conversations of his own with the third man. Take the average interpreter. Suppose you are interviewing some interesting but incomprehensible person, you will say to your mouthpiece "Ask him if he went to So-and-so." The average interpreter's words will flow like babbling brooks, and the words of the Interesting Person like rushing rivers. At the end of three or four minutes you will break in with "Well, what does he say?"

"He says 'No'."

But this man was a jewel of a Jew, and had the happy knack of telling you just what you wanted to know, without embroidery. We dived into the Turkish quarter, where the house-walls rise bare to little filagree-shuttered windows, high and few, and the doors in the garden walls are heavily clamped and barred. Up there were the *harems* of that legendary beauty which can never be proved by the shameless *Giaour*. Then the Jews' quarter, where you duck through a door in the street wall and come into an unexpected garden with green, shady trees and shingly paths. Then about the town by twisty streets and open places, but everywhere the same strange emptiness. After the crowded channels of Dubnitsa, Samakov seemed deserted.

Even the *café* was held by a solitary gimlet-eyed man sipping coffee and reading a newspaper. The *prevotchek* nudged me and growled "Comitaji—revolutionaire." Here, then, we were

in touch with the insurgents—the men who were making things buzz over the border. Samakov, said the Jew, was the head-quarters of several bands, whose active members constantly slipped back to it by night to see their friends or to collect food and ammunition.

Skip looked at me—the same idea struck us both on the instant.

“What’s the good of waiting for war—why not join the bands?”

CHAPTER V.

Because he lived among a simple folk,
Because his village was between the hills.

A TEARING wind blew out of the darkness down the ill-lit main street. The *café* lights at the corner and the chinks of the shuttered street-windows glimmered through a whirl of dust, leaves, scraps of paper and powdered rubbish which the gale whisked up and carried with it.

In the gloom of a wall, sneezing in the thick smother, we waited and watched the street corner. Across the road a dark form stood in a doorway and watched the watchers. Now and then a man passed, hunched against the wind and holding his hat on. Suddenly round the corner came a short figure hurrying past us with a wave of the hand. At ten yards' distance we followed, stumbling over the rough roadway with the grit filling eyes and nostrils, till our guide slowed down at a deserted corner and let us come up with him.

"*It's all right,*" he said in a hoarse whisper ; "*he will be there. Come quickly and make no noise.*"

On again down an utterly dark alley, falling over great stones and splashing through an invisible stream which ran down the middle. At the end

was a high wall over which sounded a threshing of branches. The short man rat-tatted a private signal on a high double door. As we stood silent a gust carried a rush of dry leaves round the wall, and a roaring of wind and trees came out of the darkness behind it. A girl opened the door, barred it after us, and led through dark tree-masses up invisible steps and down a narrow passage to where a little oil lamp burned weakly in a low room.

We sat down on a red Turkish *divan* which ran all round, and stared at each other. Here we had come, with all the time-honoured ceremonial of conspiracy, to find a local insurgent leader, guided and introduced by (of all people in the world) an elderly American missionary. Later on I found out what an understanding there is between the missionaries and the fighting-men, who tell their plans with confidence to the foreigners when they would not trust a fellow-countryman. The missionaries always knew what was going on. But that night the idea was new, and I secretly commended the old gentleman's sporting blood in working the mystical ropes of this finger-on-lip sort of business.

A sallow-faced man, with a short black beard and moustache, came in with a handful of papers, glancing suspiciously at us ; but the sight of our reverend friend reassured him, and sitting down the two talked in Bulgarian. The insurgent wore an ordinary black coat and soft black hat tilted back. Behind him had come his despatch-bearer, a young peasant, who sat upright on the *divan* in the dim

background. Whilst the wind howled in the window-chinks the missionary unfolded our proposal to join one of the *chétas*, or bands, on the frontier.

“ Ah! can they walk? ” asked the leader. “ It is hard work, mind you ; they may have to climb all day. ”

We thought we were equal to it.

“ And it will mean carrying a rifle and ammunition—probably fighting. ”

We would do what we could in that direction too. And now, for our part, what about getting our news and sketches sent back ?

They would undertake to send a special messenger whenever practicable to bring them down to the nearest post-office.

Question and answer ran on in the same guarded undertone. As we sat, all four heads together, it reminded me of nothing so much as a game of “ clumps ” in a drawing-room at home, only that our faces could not approach in expression the tense seriousness which goes to the unravelling of that knotty problem, “ animal, vegetable, or mineral ? ” The oily flame of the little lamp was right behind the insurgent’s head, and his face—all in shadow—melted into the black of his beard and humped shoulders. The yellow light touched the grey locks of the old missionary and emphasized the wrinkles which always gave the suggestion of a smile to his face. Old Skip’s fine profile was sharply outlined against the glare, as he tapped thoughtfully on the crown of his battered straw.

It was arranged in the end that the young warrior sitting there in the corner should carry to the leader of a band in the mountains the offer of the two volunteers, and with all speed return with the answer. In two or at most three days we should know what were the prospects of seeing life with the avenging hillmen.

Meanwhile we must possess our souls in as much



patience as might be, and work up the leg-muscles. Finally, we were sworn to profound secrecy as to our visit and all things connected with it.

The exit from the darksome scene was made in the same cloak-and-dagger fashion as the entrance, and it only needed "*Peace, caitiff, we are obser-r-ved,*" or, "*Aha! let us dissembul,*" to complete the blood-curdling effect. No doubt it was all very necessary, but it takes a long time for the

serious conditions of life in those blade-and-bullet countries to soak into the easy British mind. At any rate, it lacks a proper appreciation of the melodramatic, and is apt to look upon itself lurking in secret places with an unseemly levity.

All night the storm raged. Sheets of rain crashed on the bed-room windows, doors banged and the old hostelry creaked under it. Through all the racket the Oof-bird slept serene, and in every little lull the diapason of his thunderous snores vibrated through the partition wall, outrivalling the elements.

In the morning to our bedsides came Koy-etcetera, the interpreter, who had some refugees to show us and bid us hurry to see them. But breakfast was not to be so lightly skimmed over. Three boiled eggs, very hot, clasped gingerly in the left hand whilst the right works a large spoon, take an appreciable time to eat. With these appeared an army of drinking ware—a small cup of Turkish coffee of sickening sweetness, a jug of boiled milk, a sturdy cup in which to mix the two, and a glass of cold water. All these multiplied by three make a majestic spectacle. Whilst they were being treated with due attention poor Koyo fidgetted about like a cook whose surprise dish is being spoiled by over-waiting, but at last he got us started.

The hills had each a cap of snow and it was much colder, but the sky had cleared and the mud was slowly stiffening under the sun and a south-westerly breeze. Through a gate in a high paling we came into a yard where men were clustered in

groups and women sat on planks about the sides. The men's fezzes stamped them refugees before their dull, hunted look proved it. The women crouched together holding their small children, or carrying the smallest slung on their backs in blankets.

Men and women looked tired—dead tired and sick of life, and well they might be. Their village, Belitza, had been rushed by the Turkish soldiers in the old style—repeated to weariness—and such of the village folk as could get away made a rush for the hills—nearly all women, carrying their children and helping the old men. As they ran the black-guards fired into them; some dropped, others sprang forward, hard hit, to fall in the awful scramble up the hill-side. Looking back, they saw the smoke rise over their homes and knew they should never see them again except as black ruins. On the hill-crest the women sank down, breathless. One of them, taking the child from her back, found it dead, shot through the head. A day and a night and another day they tramped, fell, recovered and tramped again, living on the scraps of food they could beg from shepherds or wood-cutters on the heights of the Rilo Dagh. Up there, in the snow, one of the women gave birth to a child, and, marvellous to say, it was still living. So, with an escort from the frontier-post, these miserable outcasts struggled into Samakov. Between two and three hundred there were, counting the youngsters. How many were killed or captured in the village, shot on the hillside, or lay dead of exhaustion on the crest, none knew. Many of them had come in

wounded, and the least hurt of these sat here nursing a roughly-tied arm or head till the doctor could see them. Some of the little girls—tiny things of six or seven, with old, serious faces—carried a baby brother or sister tied on their backs. The weight of responsibility seemed heavier on them than the weight of the infant.

Here and there was one—woman or boy—stupid with fear, who turned moaning to tear the wall with frantic fingers at the sight of a stranger.



A call from the corner of the yard brought the men and boys round a cart piled with brown loaves, which were served out to them by one of the Relief Committee of the town—good folks, who gave their money and their labour to keep those weary fugitives alive. This was no new work to them. All summer

the broken wanderers had been coming in from the sacked villages, all with the same story and in the same distress. Rilo Monastery, in the hills, had harboured thousands, and was overflowing. Most of its overflow came down to Samakov and there found a permanent refuge. In

a large barrack-like building they made their home, sleeping on rugs and old clothes between the wooden pillars of its great upper room. Here in the corners were little bivouacs, the family circle sitting round its meal of bread and onions, eating mechanically. On the white wall hung one or two of the striped satchels they carry their belongings in—empty.

With his back to a pillar squatted an old, wizened man, less cast down than the rest. Wagging his hand he gabbled to a heedless woman beside him. He was ready enough to talk to our Jew, and as the clacking went on his thousand and one wrinkles actually hitched themselves into a grotesque grin. He wound up with a snap, and two quacks of laughter like an old drake. Amazed at this hilarity in the midst of misery we demanded his story, and having heard it acquitted him of all offence. He was a proud man that day, for he had done a Turk in the eye, which is to a Macedonian peasant as though he had won the **U.C.** He was a mason, and the Turk had ordered him to build a house. Hardly was it begun when the Moslem employer left the district, first—with most unusual generosity—paying his builder for the whole of the work. Two days later (this is where you laugh) the mason was driven over the border by his employer's own countrymen with all the money in his pocket and all the work left for somebody else to do. For sixty years the Turks had robbed him, but now he had got a bit back. Yes, he believed his brother was missing, but we must excuse his smile. We left the old fellow slapping his leg and coughing

in his glee. Truly he "builded better than he knew."

Now there were shouts in the yard and everybody clattered and tumbled down the staircase to join a gathering of all the men. In the middle of the crowd an official stood aloft and monotoned a "Proclamation" from the Sultan of Turkey.—This Much-enduring but Merciful Monarch, though greatly distressed at the heartless desertion of a number of his Christian subjects, had decided, in his open-hearted clemency, to allow them to return to their homes (!), where they should henceforward live a glorious life of peace and ease under Bulgarian officials.

The heartless deserters discussed this magnanimous offer in little groups, but they were wiser in their generation than the Concert of Europe in all its years, and they knew by that experience which does not appeal to Governments—the intimate knowledge of the man on the spot—that this was another embodiment of the great god Humbug, whose other names are Fudge, Bunkum, Rot, and many more less delicate. So they preferred the career of the refugee to the Sultan's Peace, and answered "*Néma, néma,*"* to the taker of votes.

And there they stayed, contented and comfortable, better fed than they were at home, but an increasing burden to the town. For although money was coming into the country from Europe and America, it did not cover all the needs, and the frontier towns and Rilo Monastery were hard

* "No, no."

put to it to keep their refugee camps going. The big relief centres, like Burghas on the Black Sea, which took the exiles of the Adrianople district, were manned by Europeans—mostly English—and Americans, who worked as they always have done in like cases, and to them the greater part of the subscribed funds was sent. Here in Samakov, *popes* and townsfolk did their part in keeping the outcasts clothed, housed and fed for months. The young men generally went out with the bands and a few of the elder ones were given some work in the town, but the rest seemed to do nothing but eat, sleep, and sit about in the yards.

The Oof-bird, as you may imagine, had not let many hours go by without discovering a citizen who hoarded obsolete lucre, and in due time we all repaired to the house of the same. In a charming little clean white room we sat on the universal *divan* and pored with faces of deep wisdom over the relics of bygone cash, displayed on a black cloth by their proud Bulgarian owner. From the number pushed aside with disparaging comments by our collector I gathered that the "pool" was a fairly valuable one, and sure enough the two of them were soon hard at it in German, insulting each other's judgment like a couple of horse-dealers.

Skip and I, being out of the ring in this contest of professional pleasantries, were getting rather bored, when to us entered two bewitching nymphs bearing the fruits of Lebanon and pleasant spices. The leading syren was black as to the hair and eyes, but her face was fair and she smiled divinely.

Her sister, more demure and shy, had hair of brown and eyes of blue, with fine dark lashes. The first of these visions of beauty of course went for the handsome man, and was soon laughing and spilling water over Skip's fingers. To me came the maiden with the down-cast eye, shyly presenting a tray of white-powdered sweetmeats. There were also a handful of small spoons and two or three glasses of water. I looked up for instructions, but the dark lashes were still down. Nothing for it but to chance the ceremonial and do the obvious. In went a spadeful of the white confectionery, none other than the "Turkish Delight" of our childhood under its grown-up name of *Lokoum*. Oh, cloying, speech-destroying stuff! At that moment she looked up and fired a question from the azure eyes.

"Oh, yum-yum! Ha—h-m!" (gulp) "*Très gut!—Sehr bon!*" (agonised dash for the water). Restored to consciousness, I saw that Skip had taken the water first and the stickjaw after, so I believe, on points, I won. My silent sylph was delightful and hardly smiled. When I had persuaded her to sit down I gathered that she was learning French, but was very timid about exposing her ignorance. But then those quiet ones always know a great deal more than they pretend to. Our host, having finished about square in his fight with the Oof-bird, turned to exploit his charming daughters, and found they were both doing pretty well.

The black beauty was a nailer at German,

and in about thirty seconds Skip and she were humming some song of the Fatherland—the old rascal pleased as Punch and wagging his finger to the time. Papa looked as if the thing was getting just a little overdone, which reduced the demure one to monosyllables, though the effect on the black-eyed witch was not so marked. Anyhow it seemed time for a move, and with bowings and glowing compliments we took our leave of the two charmers and their monied parent. Alas! we never saw the Bulgarian beauties again. The next time we called they were kept safely out of sight, so—as a mark of displeasure—we struck the old man off our visiting list.

Outside the town were some barracks inhabited by a cohort of warriors who appeared, from Koyo's brilliant word-pictures, to be a mountain battery. To make sure I penetrated their outer march—a rickety rail fence—the next morning. In the unguarded buildings I found a grey-coated officer with a knowledge of French which he greatly underestimated, who with characteristic good nature spent the morning walking his foreign visitor round the barracks and making all things clear. His long, double-breasted coat of dove-grey fitted him admirably, and the smart blue peaked cap with black velvet band finished off a neat and attractive kit.

They were at war strength and the barrack rooms were packed full. As each was entered the men in the room stood smartly to attention and remained so till we went out again. Wooden make-shift cots, hastily put together, touched each

other all round the room. Each was broad enough to hold four palliasses, which were down, with grey blankets laid neatly over them, and behind each pillow a small stick with a label bearing the man's name and number. Under the cots were the men's wooden chests in which they kept all their belongings, so there was no marching-order kit getting dusty on a shelf. Round the wooden pillars up the centre of the room were stacked *Männlicher* carbines, the last pillar surrounded by the sergeants' curved swords. A trophy of trumpets and a framed copy of orders completed the furniture of this Spartan chamber, in which a hundred men lived and slept; forms were unnecessary—if they wanted to sit down they sat on the beds. Everything in the room from floor to window-panes was scrupulously clean, and the sword-guards were a sight. Like the men that fought at Minden,

“ They didn't grouse nor shirk at an hour's extry work,
They kept 'em bright as gold.”

In the stables the same order and cleanliness. Boards were slung down between each of the ponies and over him on a brass plate was his name in Russian letters. All the gun-ponies are Bulgarian. The Gunners—Field and Mountain—are the only arm who use the native animal; they find them just as useful as mules for hill work and much easier to get. The officers, like the cavalry, ride Hungarian horses.

My guide was indefatigable.

“Would you like to see the cook-house?—Come along. Of course the cooks and the boilers are all doing double work just now—these hungry fellows of ours get through tremendous quantities of *tchorba*. Look at those sturdy rascals there”—pointing to a squad on the square. “New draft of recruits we’ve just got up, and they eat twice as



much as the duty-men. Here are the boilers.” We dived under the low door of the cook-house.

“Try some of the soup, won’t you?” The big sinewy cook brought a long-handled dipper and ladled out the red pottage, of which immeasurable depths swam in the two great boilers. I have had many a worse plateful in West-end restaurants. The soldier’s menu in Bulgaria is a simple matter: Soup *au choix* and nothing else, barring

the brown bread he eats with it. What would happen to "Tommy" with his joints and cuts, his puddings and pies and jams and all the other oddments that go to gratify but rarely satisfy his exacting taste—what would become of our dear man-at-arms if it were proposed to him, in barracks, that he should support his tender frame for one short week on vegetable soup? Oh, ye quartermasters, think of it!

They have no liquor served out to them, and there is no canteen. If they feel a desire to mingle strong drink they must go to the town drinking-shops; but they are not great toppers and "drunks" are practically unknown.

Walking back with my grey-coated friend, we met the Major commanding the battery and some of the other officers, and an invitation to dinner followed. The major, a little hearty man with a 'Navy' beard, could manage a little English, which terrible tongue was then tormenting his leisure moments. He spoke it slowly but with conviction.

That night at the hotel, whilst some roast lamb was under discussion (there is no season of the year at which roast lamb cannot be got in the Balkans), arrived some fellow news-hunters from Dubnitza, and with them the Barnacle. His collar was a richer shade of grey and his grin was let out two holes. He was "engineering the trip."

"Say, but I know de ropes. Dese natives cann't make much off me, I tell you. Dat team I get for Mr. Cinch, now, it's a crackajack team."

“That *you* got?” says Mr. Cinch. “I thought *I* got it.” The Barnacle hastily looked for a dropped cigarette.

There was news of sorts. The uproar in Macedonia seemed to be petering out. Most of the bands were making for home and winter quarters, and the west side was nearly quiet again. The Bulgarian Government was going to make a strong show of stopping all bands crossing from this side, to balance a promise from the Turks that they would take some of their troops off the frontier. All distinctly bad for two people who wanted to get over the border with one of those prohibited bands in a day or two, and also to see some small bickering when they got there. Still, we pinned our faith to the chief conspirator and the magic lamp, and hammered on the table for “William,” the crop-headed serving boy.

“*Vino?*” says he. I nodded. There is a wise saw that says a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, but it is no better than a flat negative to a keen-eyed Bulgar. The two signs that come to us more naturally than speech—that have been to us as rod and staff since childhood—are plucked from under us, and we are left defenceless, or worse, for our own trusted weapons are turned against us. It is easier to write with your left hand than to shake your head when you are thinking “Yes,” or to nod for “No.” It can only be done by an effort of concentration and iron will-power such as goes to the pulling out of one’s own tooth. “Learn to say ‘No’” is a good precept, but “learn not to

say ' Yes ' when you don't want to " is the one for the Eastern countries, and the learning has cost me, for one, a round sum in solid cash ; besides which it has on several occasions caused the natives and myself to think ill of each other, and to say things which we were sorry for afterwards.

Another disastrous belief of theirs is that when you wave them away you are beckoning them to approach, the natural consequence being that all the people you least want to know, such as beggars with loathsome diseases, press round with touching affection. I do not know what their sign is for "Go away," but I used a peculiar gesture of the foot at close quarters which left them no doubt in the matter.

Betimes in the morning we bid our valued friend the Oof-bird a fond farewell as he left us for Sofia with the temporary owner of the crackajack team. As the gorgeous equipage lurched away, the Barnacle, on the box, was loudly assuring all hands of his intimate knowledge of the route. Poor Barnacle ! He was shot dead in the public gardens at Sofia a few months afterwards as a suspect. With all his bluffing I am sure he had not the power in him to do any harm. How pleased he would have been to know that he had reached the dignity of being dangerous !

During the morning a visitor was announced, and the insurgent leader came in with many regrets that as yet no news had come down about our joining the *chète*. The troops on the frontier, he said, had been very strict the last few days in

preventing the crossing of any bands into Macedonia, so evidently the Government order was really meant this time. To-morrow or the next day the decision would arrive, and all must be ready for a start at an hour's notice. It was already arranged that the Jew should get the native skin shoes and flannel leggings if necessary, and with a blanket each and a haversack for food and writing gear we should be ready for the war-path. The idea of going over for a couple of nights to Rilo Monastery was cancelled, that we might be on the spot when the answer came.

Next day was mail-day, so arranged that the stuff might reach London in plenty of time for the weeklies. Keeping up the Natal tradition, we never shaved on mail-day till the work was off. The two little bedroom tables were pulled out, garnished with paper and great store of tobacco, and there followed many hours of solemn silence with an occasional voice demanding the name of a bridge, or the number of troops at Nastikoff. The flies buzzed in and out of the open windows, the shabby draggled-tailed geese took dust-baths in the baking street, and Skip's indelible pencil straggled on and on. Whenever he was at a loss for a word it was his habit to scratch his head with the point of this pencil to stimulate his brain; indeed, it wandered indifferently up and down his person till by the end of the day he was all over purple blotches. Then he would charge the post-office with his fat envelopes, full of fierce determination not to miss the mail, and the people would fade

away from before him at the sight of that tattooed face as they would before an armed cannibal.

With the work safely off, soap and water flew through the air, razors flashed and hair-brushes waved. Each man put on his other shirt, tied his tie or folded his stock with fearful precision, and sallied out to dine with the Mountain Gunners.

CHAPTER VI.

For you all love the screw-guns—the screw-guns they all love you.

“ AH! How—do—you—do?” sang out the affable Major in English, as a huge soldier opened the door out of the little hall. “ Come in—come in. I will present—my—officers.”

There were about a dozen of them there, of all sorts and sizes, in the dark-blue day-jackets of their battery—Prince Boris’s—with trim beards or shaven chins, and sturdy, useful-looking men all. Very simple and undecorated their mess-room, with its bare floor and white walls.

“ Here, do you see?”—the Major led us by the arms to a portrait of the boy prince, Bulgaria’s heir-apparent—“ here is our Colonel. We are his regiment—proud!” He pointed to his little Colonel’s silver initial on his epaulette. “ Now we will dine.”

And dine we did! First liqueur—two or three glasses were *de rigueur*. Then we entered into a labyrinth of strange meats, soups, and wondrous foods which all happened where they were least expected and followed each other with breathless

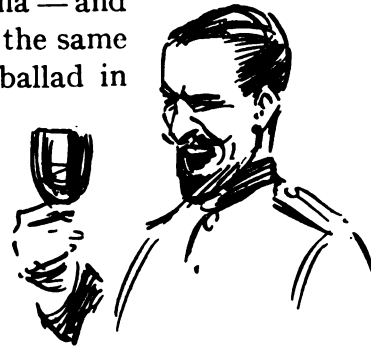
speed. In the merry-go-round I recognised split sausages, and distinctly remember some fat unknown vegetable which we took with our fingers from a dish in the middle of the table. I never met it before or since. The shower of dishes covered a determined attack on our sobriety by all troops present, and the men on each side, armed with flacons of *vino* and *raki*, poured in a steady stream of fire-water.

Out of the stacks of crockery stood up some silver models of different sized shells, their own little seven-pounder among them. This was the only specimen of mess-plate, and it was easy to see that in ordinary times the whole tone of the mess was simplicity and a complete absence of luxury of any kind. They live as soldiers of a past age, and easy chairs and lounges are no part of their life.

As the last of the panorama of plates disappeared and tobacco smoke mingled over the table, the Major sent for his mandoline and charmed us with the music of his country. He laid his hand on it so that it talked and told us through those plaintive airs all that the men of old time had suffered under the Turkish yoke—the yearnings and cryings of a people in bondage. Slowly it told of the labour and the burden too heavy to bear, then in came a sad little song of weariness, and on this a growing protest rising to a wild burst of rage against the oppressor, and an outcry for help. Then it died down—impotent, hopeless—to take up the colourless, profitless work in the heat again.

Plainer than any words were the little melodies, made long ago, not with cunning but out of the sorrow of the soul.

The regimental songster now came on, and produced familiar friends from *Faust* and *Il Trovatore* with great strength and without accompaniment. Then Skip and I put up "A hot time in the old town to-night" — alack! that our "war-drum" had had to be left behind in Sofia — and more classic song of the same ilk. A fine warlike ballad in Bulgarian, with a fiery chorus of all the gallant Gunners, cleared the way for the big plum of the



evening, a fighting-drinking song, the first verse of which might be roughly put down as

"After battle fierce and gory,
All ablaze with fame and glory,
Give us, while we tell the story,
Vino, vino—
Wine to cheer the heart."

or words to that effect. The "*Vino, vino*" chorus is easy, and so is the tune, and we all stood up and

waved glasses in the vibrating air and roared at the full pitch of our lungs. Oh Lord! the row! Again and again the bellowing rose, with glass clinkings and vows of good fellowship.

Whilst they all wrote their unspeakable names in my sketch-book I heard Skip translating "*Down the road, away went Polly*" into German—" *das ist ein Pferd* "—for the benefit of a polite but mystified officer whose acquaintance with Mr. Gus Elen was but then beginning. After we two had delivered "*For he's a jolly good fellow*" for the special benefit of the Major, best of hosts, the whole train-band—jolly good fellows all—saw us back to the local Carlton and left us.

As we stood there on the doorstep, watching them out of sight and humming the "*Vino*" chorus, there appeared suddenly two men supporting another who hobbled between them. As they padded silently past in the moonlight, another and another group appeared, each with a sick man stumbling forward, or walking with swathed head or bound-up arm. Some of the men with them wore ordinary English-looking caps :—insurgents bringing in their wounded. We watched the noiseless string go past—about a dozen groups—and turn down a side street. Evidently there had been a fight near the frontier and the *chèta* had been driven back over the line. Something to be enquired into tomorrow. We trundled off to bed, but somehow the "*Vino*" chorus had got mislaid.

Not long were we deprived of the capital company of our gunner friends, for at eight in the

morning their bugles were rousing the pigeons off the roof as the head of the column swung into the main street opposite the inn. The men wore the coffee-coloured uniform, with great-coats *en bandolier* over the shoulder, and carbines slung. To the tops of their high, wrinkly boots were strapped



spiked rings, which they fasten to the heels for climbing work. The Major, all smiles as usual, rode up with a couple of ponies for his correspondent friends, and away we all went for the hills. In rear of the column marched a squad of recruits—their second day in uniform—keeping step to the bugles and throwing a chest like a

guardsman. And the men round the gun-ponies—hard as nails—had a spring to their step that stood for any number of miles a day. For with them as with us,

“It's only the pick of the Army that handles the dear little pets.”

To each gun four ponies. The leader carries the carriage, the second wheels and shafts, the third the gun (in one piece), and the fourth the ammunition. The folding shafts carried by the second pony can be fixed to the trail of the gun, so that it can be shifted about by one animal. The little four-legged gunners—all mane and tail—are obviously proud of their job, and know their drill as well as the men. The long snaky body twined up the rough hill-path at a good pace and came at last to a big stretch of rolling down-land. The Major shouted a word of command, the ponies turned sharp right and halted as the men flung themselves on the gun parts, tore them from the saddles, wheels clacked on to axles, the little gun jolted into the trunnions whilst the shafts were fitted to the trail, and in twenty seconds every man was standing steady. Six dwarf guns looked stolidly across the valley. The ponies, with flapping straps and clinking buckles, were trotting rearward over the hill crest.

The Major's camera was next dismounted and put together in record time, and the gallant officer laid and loaded the deadly weapon with his own hands. He then sat down on an ammunition box in the middle of a graceful group, and allowed



Mountain Battery on the March.

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himself (and us) to be shot at short range by his orderly.

After that we all careered round about the hills. Everybody got very enthusiastic and warlike, and it was only the possibility of ruffling the authorities at Sofia that prevented the whole outfit making a move for the frontier straight away, and dropping a round or two of shrapnel over the wall on the chance of bagging a stray Turk. However, a certain delicacy about annoying the powers that be put a stop to this excellent project, or there might have been some considerable rumpus even at that late hour. So we had to be satisfied with the promise of a front seat when the real show opened, and go on with the dress-rehearsal.

On the road home the best singers were put in the forefront and raised a marching song that carried everything with it. They splashed through a hill-foot stream without looking at it, and strode cheerily down the town with a tramping chorus that brought all the girls to the doors with a run.

Merry mountain men! With their keen hard-working officers, unspoiled by over-comfort, they stand for all that is best in the young Bulgarian army, and when the great day comes I think a rude shock is in store for their ancient enemy—

“At the hands of a little people, few but apt in the field.”

Snapping the column as it marched in was a long good-looking American, just up from Turkey, where he had been hunting news so closely that a bare second's grace had saved him being shot for a

revolutionist in the bomb troubles at Salonica. No foreknowledge told us, as we exchanged names, that next summer, in the brotherhood of the trail, we should be worrying the Turks together in those hills seen from the frontier post at Guishevo.

The omniscient *prevotchek* of course knew all about the wounded men of last night, and gleefully led the way to the hospital. The doorway of a little white, two-storied cottage among the acacias was beset by a couple of dozen friends and relatives clamouring for news of the patients. The very garden was full of the reek of iodoform. A dark energetic man in a long white apron waved them back as he listened, keen-eyed, to Koyo's introduction. In a sunny whitewashed room sat a boy and a man, one wounded in the head and the other in the arm and chest. A stout white-clad doctor was clipping the hair away from the boy's scalp-wound, and the trembling youngster, his arm entwined in the back of his chair, twitched his bare toes with the pain. The other, an oldish grizzled man, watched the dressing of his wound with dull, fixed eyes. The *Mauser* bullet had flipped through the fleshy part of his upper arm and chest—two little holes in each—whilst he lay down to fire. Properly treated it was entirely harmless. The old peasant stared with grave wonder as the cold water injected at one puncture flowed out at the other into a little basin, shaped to the body. The dressing over, he talked, untroubled by the sobbing of the boy.

His *cheta*, just over the border line, had been sur-



A Bulgarian Funeral.

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prised and outnumbered; and finally driven back, fighting hard, to the shelter of Bulgarian soil. Many of his friends, natives of this town, had been wounded, and some killed. Worse than all, his rifle had been lost—an old spit-fire that he had loved and shot Turks with for more years than he could count. Grumbling to himself he was wrapped up by the doctor and led up the narrow staircase. The upper floor held four wards—one for women. A refugee girl lay in one of the iron beds with the inevitable kerchief on her head. She had been badly hit in the shoulder running from the Turks, but was now nearly convalescent. A woman in the next bed had had a Martini bullet in the leg, a much more serious affair than a Mauser wound, she assured us, and in her pride rolled out of bed to show us the injured limb. The active doctor saved the situation by bundling her back again.

None of the women's cases just then were very serious, he explained, pulling the bed-clothes straight; and added, with the medical man's callousness: "Oh, yes; several of them have died in the last two months. Some of them came in cut about with swords—that takes much more curing than a bullet wound." But the Turks do not use expanding bullets, and the Bulgarian doctors have never had a case brought in with half a limb torn away, such as was common in South Africa. That is a sort of bullet-wound that commands respect.

For some unexplained reason the windows were all kept shut, and although the wards were clean and tidy the closeness and thick iodoform reek

from below made them terribly stuffy. It was good to get out again and smell the clean air.

Walking down the main street a low drone of voices smote our ears, and round a corner came a man carrying something like a large tray on his head. Then, in a row, followed three *popes* in their flowing black gowns, chanting a dirge from little books. Behind them two sturdy natives bore a stretcher, and on it the body of a man in a black suit with a little astrachan cap on his head. The face of the corpse was a glaring yellow, thrown up by a black beard and moustache. A few flowers were strewn about the body.

Last came women and girls and a few men walking in order, some of them singing. The men at the shop-doors and the waggoners took off their caps and looked on the ground, chin on chest. The little company trudged on in the sun to the cemetery at the outskirts of the town, some of the street people joining in at the tail end and lifting their voices with the rest. The Bulgarians always carry their dead so, for all men to see; sometimes they are in the open coffin, and a boy walks in front carrying the lid.

I went to look at the cemetery that afternoon. There was an old grey wall round it, and looking over I saw a group of women sitting round a grave with a *pope* at the head of it. They all seemed to be eating from small plates and drinking *vino*, using the grave as a table, and the *pope* ate a long way the most. I started sketching the group with a pocket pen, but if they had seen what I was



A Bulgarian Cemetery.



doing they might have adjourned the meeting, so I went to work cautiously. A glance over the wall, then duck behind it and lay on a wash of colour. Another "speer" at the picnic party and a little more work with the pen. They were not more than ten yards away and one row of women faced my wall, but they never saw, and as the pastor lit a cigarette and puffed away happily the bushes and sky went in with a flourish, and here it is. The little red box with the cross on it is for offerings of flowers. By-and-bye, after a prayer, the *pope* made off, leaving the women to collect the plates and glasses and follow him.

The ceremony of eating and drinking round the grave takes place each successive ninth day after a relative's death. This is kept up, I think, for a year. The Bulgarians generally lay a large stone shaped like a coping-stone on their graves, and the head-stones are mostly short thick crosses. Others are of wood, and many graves have no mark at all.

In those weary days of waiting, Skip and I used to put in a good deal of tramping round the district, so that if we were called on to scale rocky heights and so forth we should not be found wanting. Once we discovered at the end of a cool grove of trees a little Greek chapel. (This is not quite the name for it, but I will not introduce you to the tangles of the Patriarchate and Exarchate churches.) It was roofed with red and had a bit of a turret dome at one end, of glazed tiles—reds, greens, and yellows. The whole of its outer walls (and pro-

bably its inner ones too) were covered with the crudest nightmare pictures in shouting colours, showing red demons with tridents and forked tongues being driven into flaming pits by blue saints, whose features seemed to have suffered a violent collision with some heavy body. Round the corner a demon with obvious false teeth was prodding in the back an elderly gentleman whose bare feet were painfully prominent. The allotted space for toes had proved insufficient for the artist's needs, so the foot was, one might say, garnished with them, like radishes round a beetroot. Shouldering the magenta monstrosity was a skinny cherub of unabashed indelicacy—he belonged to the next picture—sitting on the corner of an uncomfortable cloud and observing with the apathy of his starved state the roasting of a person in a scanty night-shirt over a furious fire, the flames of which jutted from under him like the spokes of a wheel. These bright moral lessons must have sent every Bulgarian infant who was privileged to see them into premature insanity. But perhaps they were reserved for the theological education of grown men.

Out on the plain we used to watch the collecting of the great herd of milking cattle belonging to the town, which was driven in at sundown by little red-sashed urchins and noisy dogs. Half veiled in a vast gold dust-cloud the endless string straggled into the town over long blue shadows of scattered houses. As the herd passed one or two cows turned off down each side street to their homes of their own accord, till all were

safely housed. Twice I watched them to the end and never a one of all the herd went wrong.

In the first faint dawn of one chill morning a deafening clatter grew from a bad dream to a raw reality. A procession of racketting bullock-carts was jolting over those horrible cobbles, and it was market day. Though night had not decently retired those villainous vehicles would have it day, and, sleep being impossible, we made it so. The perennial "William," who must have had some Viennese blood in him which enabled him to do without sleep, produced coffee by the light of a dingy wall-lamp. Under it lounged three or four insurgents, their eyes fixed on their coffee-cups or gazing abstractedly out of the window. As the light grew and the last star faded they vanished with it.

Outside on the market-square the carts were pulling up and the men tethering the dreamy buffaloes to the wheels. The cold bit hard and the peasants had their heads entirely swathed in thick folds of cloth. It is a curious habit of the Eastern people and the Kaffirs that the first thing they do in the cold is to wrap up their heads. The rest of their bodies may freeze, but their stupid noddles must be kept warm. It is usually, with both, the first treatment in any sort of sickness too, and you will see the wretched sufferer from internal pains sitting on the ground clasping his scantily clad middle while his woe-begone eyes peer out of a regular bale of wrappings.

Later in the day, when the sun warmed them and

they came out of their husks, there were some swagger clothes to be seen. The girls wore the close-fitting white linen head-dress, with long ends hanging down the back between their plaits of hair. Most of them had tied to their own locks an extra length of plaited twine of the same colour, combed out at the end. Whether this was meant to deceive the male eye or merely as a decoration was not plain. Their sleeveless dark-blue coats and short, narrow skirts were embroidered round the edges in red and white. The neck and loose sleeves of a linen undergarment matched in whiteness the elaborately-worked petticoat which hid their thick woollen stockings. Bright ribbons and flowers mingled with the head-dresses, and round their necks hung all their wealth—gold pieces threaded on a string. When the Bulgarian girl saves a little money she converts it into a gold piece to add to this necklace. Thus any prospective husband can see at once exactly how much he will get with his bride. The men wore jackets or sheepskins, embroidered shirts, open at the chest, and tight trousers of spotless white.

The Jew-man, appearing at a civilised hour, affirmed that each village had its own build of cart, and pointed out ten variations of the general shape in as many minutes. Also, from each village came a different product—from one planks, from another charcoal, and so on. I coveted a sheepskin coat for cold mornings, but was told they were apt to get "*très impolis.*"

Back in our room at the inn we sat down and



Market folk.

solidly cursed our luck in utter weariness of waiting. This was the seventh day since that howling night when the insurgent had promised us "yes" or "no" in three days. If anything was doing over the border we were missing it; if nothing was doing we might as well go home. Anyhow, we had not come out here to study market carts. The almanack that said we had been in the country only a few weeks was pitched under the bed for a lying rag. Three months was the least any man could put it at. Personally I felt I had been smelling dust and stale coffee half my life.

Every wanderer knows those special smells. Every place has its own; you couldn't describe them—sometimes don't even notice them. But a year afterwards, back at home—or at the other end of the earth—comes a whiff in the nostrils and up leaps to your eyes the shimmering white street, or the tents and the horse lines, or a great blue depth of valley and a bit of mountain trail, or a surging crowd of sweating soldiers; every man has his own little picture gallery, but they're all due some time or other.

In the midst of the cursing the man arrived. We read the answer in his apologetic shoulders.

"No go."

CHAPTER VII.

The trail and the packhorse again,
Salut !

SURE enough, we were too late. No more teams could enter Tom Tiddler's Ground to carry on the Great Game. The gates were shut and the janitor could not be squared. So the *chèta* would none of us.

The opinions uttered in the next ten minutes shall remain unwritten. After that, when the cooling-off process was working, a few ideas as to our own destination dropped one by one into the sulphurous silence, to be taken up and chewed meditatively.

Down in the *café* corners o' nights there was a whisper among the Mysterious Men of a new *rendezvous* away over the hills to the south-east. In a valley (low be it spoken) called Tchepina, some of the men of the Samakov district were rallying, and it was rumoured (Sh !) that there was a hole in the boundary fence.

It seemed good enough. Anyhow, whether it came off or not, we were both town-sick—clean fed up with *cafés* and cobbles—and the trail-hunger was strong upon us. We "desired the hills."

Koyo was called to solemn *indaba* and the route wrung from him between suppressed bursts of protest. Horses? The hill trail? Without a guide? Not to be done. It was a "*mauvais Balkan*," infested with people of uncertain manners. To be lost, robbed and starved to death were the least evils that could befall a stranger there. He was quelled and ordered to produce ponies at once. The only things in the town were balanced on two legs each and their ribs rattled audibly. They were left to die in peace, and the innkeeper's own old road-barrow was drawn reverently from its shrine for our use. In this we could get to the railway at Bania, train to Bellovo, get ponies there and ride over the "*mauvais Balkan*" to Tchepina.

That night we bid farewell to the Gunners. One of them looking in at bedtime found us in a very neglected costume. Skip, never at a loss, caught up a counterpane and flinging it toga-fashion round his manly form, advanced imperially to wag the embarrassed officer by the hand.

Next morning we took the road, diving gladly into the dust of it, that smelt so different to the dust of the town. Tramping up a hill, a four-horsed *fiacre* passed, with a Russian Red-Cross nurse going to Burghas to help the relief committee. Taking an "easy" at a half-way village we roamed in the breathless heat towards the clinking of a blacksmith's hammer. In a dark shed was a bullock upside down on the ground, his hoofs lashed to a stout pole held over him by a wooden tripod. The blacksmith was shoeing him with flat discs



In a dark shed was a bullock upside down.

1800-5074

with a little hole in the middle to let the dust in. Some of them hung on the wooden wall among the weapons of the Bulgarian blacksmith's craft, the sight of which would have whitened the hair of his late colleague of the "spreading chestnut-tree."

"Up the hills and down again" till the little lonely station building threw its cool shadow over our sweating ponies. The train whistled in the cutting and civilization came back in a rush.

From the corridor windows the little strip of white, sun-baked road we had just come down was a well-remembered way in a past life. The well-dressed people in the stuffy carriages—going through from the capitals to Constantinople—stared hard, so that our eyes were opened, and we beheld ourselves as dusty tramps, collarless and unpopular. The attendant was hoping for luck in the afternoon when the train got into Turkey. Two days before he had seen the dining-car rise in the air before him over a few pounds of dynamite, just past the frontier at Mustapha Pasha. He wished the Company were in better favour with "*ces messieurs*"—sweeping his hand towards the hills.

In an hour we were at Bellovo, a handful of red roofs in a mass of timber. Piled planks surrounded it, huge logs cumbered its station yard, and a hillside forest backed it. The sawmill boasted London-made machinery and produced, among other things, a smart little person from "Philippopole"—the name suited him exactly—who kindly translated our needs to the man who owned the local "horses." By the light of recent experience the

animals themselves provoked a deep distrust in the mind from their apparent soundness and very moderate prominence of rib, but after an hour's bargaining (for who will not cheat the stranger?) they were finally booked. We spent most of the afternoon sitting in the middle of the Maritza river under a nice little waterfall, which unwonted sight froze the marrow in the bones of Philip Popole, speechless on the bank.

Next day was Sunday and a brilliant morning. The steeds, promised at six, had to be personally sought at seven-thirty. They were thatched with large wool mats, over which towered a structure of bent ironwork. One of these, in turn, was covered with a small pink pillow and the other with a skin—presumably that of a defunct cow. These, said the owner with pride, were European saddles, procured at great cost and trouble for our special benefit. A pair of very short stirrups, hung far back, helped to concentrate the mind on trivial details for the first mile or so, after which the impression of sitting on the roof of a dog-kennel carried by a calf which one steered with a piece of string began to wear off.

By that time, jogging down the valley road, we had made a little Swiss-looking village, where pigs and babies fought for a place in the stream running down the middle of the street. From here a track shot suddenly upward into the hills at an angle of forty-five, between red-berried bramble-bushes overrun by wild vine. A hundred yards up we had to pull out for a string of wood-cutters' ponies picking their way down with fifteen-foot planks lashed to

their saddles, balancing—fore-end in the air, back end just clear of the ground behind.

Another mile, stumbling up the bottom of a dry watercourse, and the oaks gave way to beeches. The cutting narrowed till the crumbly banks were at arm's length on each side, the leaves closed in overhead, and for ten minutes we tramped in welcome shade, leading the ponies. Coming out on to the ledge-like track again, the hillside across the deep valley showed a great mass of burnt-sienna oaks with a splash of blue-green pine or red-gold birch.

"Hello!" says Skip suddenly, "here's a hard-lookin' lot." Half-a-dozen wayfarers sprawling in the scrub stared curiously. Black-browed and unshaven, some of them toyed with young carving-knives and their bulging red sashes suggested a whole armoury of lethal weapons. As we passed one of them flung us the greeting of the road—"Dobré." A few hundred yards up, scooped out of the bank, was a small water-hole lined with dead leaves. Unthinking, I let the white pony bury his muzzle in it and suck up the water.

"Better be careful," says Skip, "that's probably a men's drinking-place."

As I pulled the pony's nose out and turned up hill again our swarthy friends with the cutlery appeared, coming up at a great pace and shouting. They had evidently seen the defiling of their water-hole and were bristling with rage. It is useless to try and tell excited men whose language you don't know that you are sorry you have made a bad

mistake, so we mounted and rode on, apparently sublimely indifferent to the yelling behind. Presently the wheeze of their heavy breathing sounded between gruff shouts as they laboured up the steep path close behind; but there is nothing like the timely sight of a wee bit weapon to bring peace to the angry man. The heat was enough excuse for gently pulling off a jacket and revealing, without turning round, a little old brown pistol-holster looking down its long nose. The pursuit melted.

Near the crest the hillside fell away red-carpeted under the huge beeches, the low-toned pre-Raphaelite greens of fern and nettle mysterious in the half-light of the forest. At the hilltop on the south side we sat on the grass, and silently looked down across a wide blue-grey country of little rolling hills, plains, and tiny rivers, away to the faint peaks of the Turkish Rhodope range, hazy under the sun.

To all who have known the Glamour of the Trail, greeting! The fascination of unguessed country, the pleasure of passing, and the strong delight of unfolding it. The mightiness of the holy hills and the old untouched world. The vast space that makes you realise, and the far-away sea-roar in the pines.

Or the grip of the mere moving along, with the sun smiting on the dry tan in the fork of your bridle-hand. The smell of hot horse and the spread of his forelock tossing at the flies. The blue shadow of your boot gliding over the white dust under you, and the little Four-legs of the wilderness scurrying under the rocks and scrub for cover.

Of these, and the stretch-out in the moonlight and the thousand spells of the open, is the Glamour of the Trail. It enfolds you and gets into your blood, and lays the germs of go-fever to torment you at awkward times in civilised places.

I know of a man, deputy-assistant-sub-manager at a big London railway terminus, whose nerves went wrong, and he was sent to Switzerland by his doctor. In a fortnight he was back again, bored to death by those great dull mountains and longing for nothing but the friendly smell of the trains and the clatter of his familiar station. To each his own!

Buried in the forest on the crest were two or three woodcutters' huts, where the leather-skinned axemen lived with their families. In the clearing a couple of Mounted Police and three men afoot with rifles and bandoliers were arguing furiously. As we watched, the insurgents broke away and spread for the frontier at top speed, with the mounted men after them. With their active ponies the Police soon rounded up the runners, and, pistol in hand, drove them back down our old trail. Here was the prohibition law in actual force. The woodcutters looked on grinning.

We rode up and queried, "*Tchepina?*" The old hunter of the camp, with his ancient single-barrel gun slung on his back, guided the wanderers over the thick pine-sheddings and out to the ledge of the hill. With a fire of detailed directions (our Bulgarian stopped short at six food-names and a swear-word) the good-natured savage waved us

farewell, and, bridle over arm, we zigzagged and staggered under the noses of the slithering ponies down five hundred feet of toboggan chute. At the bottom was a trickle of water, which at full strength



had worked a deserted sawmill. Here we lay down and drank deep, and thereafter, worrying brown bread and *cirenje*, recalled a long-ago morning in the Orange Free State when we two, thirsting for

the blood of Christian de Wet, had solemnly divided a "Marie" biscuit for breakfast.

Then, mounting the pink pillow and the cow-skin, on again across a strip of burnt grass, over a hump or two, and then another long down-grade. Here, in rock and bush, the meagre trail lost itself, and so did the riders.

After half-an-hour's plunging in impenetrable bush we discovered an old shepherd and shouted to him, pointing down the hill. He shook his head in acquiescence, and getting into a dry stream-bed the ponies picked their way down into the valley. Thumping over a cranky wooden bridge, a straggling hill-village showed up. At the doors of its uneven, switchback street loafed a few sour-looking ruffians in *fez* and narrow turbans. These were the Pomaks—Bulgarian-Mohammedans. Their ancestors probably accepted the religion of the Prophet as an alternative to instant death, but the modern Pomak follows Islam more fanatically than the Turks themselves.

In a wooden shelter like a square bandstand—always built over a stream—we rested awhile and watched the folk come to the fountain. It was shaped like a section of a wall, with two spouts and a stone trough in front. One man brought a tray filled with grapes, which he held under the spout. I watched him with a good deal of interest, for I had often eaten those wet grapes and wondered where and in what manner the washing was done.

A tiny maiden with two clay pitchers balanced on the edge of the trough waited for him to give



Down
five
hundred
feet of
toboggan
shute.

[To face page 108.]



space. On her close-plaited fair hair she wore a little red *fez* with a couple of small charms in front, a little ragged Zouave jacket over a white chemise, and a faded striped apron wound round her for a petticoat. She filled her pitchers, then dived with her hands in the trough and swallowed three or four grapes swept from the washer's tray.

Two women walked gracefully to the fountain. One had a loose white jacket made with a hood to cover the face, except the eyes; the other wore the *yashmak*, a soft veil wound about her head. Most of the Pomak women have the Turkish custom of veiling, and seeing those who go uncovered one can only wish the veil were universal.

Beyond the village the trail crossed their strange neglected old cemetery, each grey head-stone shaped like a bed-post with a turban on it. Now we were in the Tchepina valley, on a flat track which touched the coils of a snaky river for the last four miles. Forging a couple of hot streams—their sandy bottom streaked with grey sediment—we pulled up at last by the little rest-house in Lojena village—eight hours from start to finish, and thirty miles as the snipe flies.

Lojena squats in the middle of eight small villages called the Tchepina district, and is chiefly little darksome drinking-houses. Perched at one end is a bit of a barrack where a few lonely infantrymen look after the road to the frontier.

In the soft, short twilight some familiar drab jackets and white legs appeared mysteriously like bats, flitting about between the doorways. After

pummelling the crusty overseer of the stable till he produced food and water for the ponies, Skip and I wandered out down the dim street, with the notion of finding some of these fighting men and pushing a claim to membership of their brotherhood.

A square of lamplight in a low doorway looked inviting, and we peered in. A few feet below, round a rough table, huddled a group of men, heads together over their coffee cups. A low note of talk came up through the cigarette smoke. They broke off and stared at the intruders, who sat apart with a glass of *vino*; then the sluices were drawn again and the streams of rhetoric flowed on.

Of course the sketch-book came out, and one by one the models drifted over and gurgled at their pencil faces. Down the steps into the half underground den lurched a wild-looking object with ragged skins over his shoulders. He was hailed with shouts of "Ancho!" and shoved on to a bench to sit for his portrait. With the shy smile of a *débutante* and eyes on the floor the embarrassed "looney" suffered the ordeal, the other men crowding over the book and chuckling with merriment. Their drab-clad leader, turning the pages, found a Turk's head. "Ah!" he snapped, and the laughter dropped dead as he fired a harsh question.

"Sofia, Sofia," said the accused artist, and things grew easy again. Strangers from Turkey are not welcome among the "clans."

We all talked volubly in the sign-language, and my partner's imitation of shooting Turks was entirely convincing. I often think of those con-



Round a rough table huddled a group of men.

versations and all we told each other, and then remember, marvelling, that not six words could have been spoken.

It was plain that they had been trying to get through into Macedonia, but without success. The application of a little *vino* conjured up brighter hopes for the future, and the possibility of two of the Foreign Legion joining them in another dash for liberty and what-d'-you-call-it. We parted firm friends and went to bed.

At the horrid hour of midnight a light flashed in my face and dark figures filled the room. Someone apologised in French for the intrusion of the police. Out of a dark corner came the drowsy Boston voice: "This is where little Willie goes to gaol." I saw the pair of us transported to Sofia loaded with chains—legs tied under the ponies—to be tried for high treason or *lèse majesté*, or some such peccadillo. The imposing parade only wanted to see the passports of their casual visitors, and thumped out again with their lanterns.

At breakfast their spokesman, a stout doctor, came to renew his apologies, and was himself decoyed into the conspiracy, so that before the morning was out he was in close confab with the ringleader in the underground drinking den, egged on by the foreign fellas. But the bandsmen had thought better of it in the night, and little old Bulgaria was good enough for them.

"Too late—too late for this year." Besides, the Turks' peasant-shooting season had closed.

"In the spring—yes, if the Englishmen come

back in the spring we will take them with pleasure."

We climbed back into the air again—dead failures.

"Huh! Bet your life!
'There'll be trouble in the Balkans in the spring,'" quoted Skip ironically. "Where's their grit? Don't amount to a hill o' beans."

The doctor was emphatic on the hopelessness of any further attempt, and there was nothing for it but the home trail.

At half-past four the next morning we sat in the dark eating bread and cheese and swallowing *tchai* (thin tea and sliced lemon in a glass), waiting for the dawn. Not till six was there light enough to see the trail. The hot streams were steaming in the cold dusk as we cantered down the valley with a sporting peasant on a smart bay pony. Away over the Sunday trail, till up in the hills we halted to watch the sun rise through rolling pink clouds over the mountains of Macedonia.

Neither yearned to ascend the toboggan shute—"nema, nema!" Cunningly we chose a way leading by gentle stages round the obstruction, forgetting the base treachery of mountain trails. The pestilent path tacked uphill and lured us further from our point at each leg of it. Then, having landed its victims in the thick of a young pine forest and four inches of snow, it vanished without a word. Towing the ponies, we made a bee-line through those crowded Christmas-trees to the crest. The bushes grew close together like turnips and shot

avalanches of snow down the necks of our open shirts. Under the wet snow on the ground were invisible logs, and every ten yards one of us was flat on his face with a grunting pony on top of him.

“By—the ten—colours,” growled Skip between his clenched teeth, pulling his old hat out of a drift and welting his jibbing animal from behind, “whoever made you—made a mistake.”

Sodden from head to heel and sweating in the sun, we struck the cross-track on the summit and jogged along the top of the divide to pick up our down-trail at the woodcutter's camp. Some eagles circled in the air over the carcass of a sheep, and waiting till one settled on a dead tree I stalked him with the Webley—and missed.

* * * * *

At half-past five in the evening we steamed into Sofia station in the rain. Empty, sloppy streets; empty, smelly hotel. No news, and everything gone flat as a punctured air-balloon. The town was dead, and all our “gang” gone home.

We packed our kits and followed them.

AFTERWORD.

I have left my opinion on the rights and wrongs of the struggle between the Christian and Moham-
medan to the end of this part.

I went out to Bulgaria prejudiced—if at all—in favour of the Turks, and that is the leaning of the average Englishman. Weeding out the wild talk of sundry Bulgarian enthusiasts and the lurid stories in their papers, I heard and saw enough sober fact to convince any honest man that the cause of the Bulgarians is—to put it mildly—the right one.

Every correspondent in Macedonia that summer, with one exception, wrote down what he knew to be facts, uninfluenced by any preconceived opinion his paper may have had, and the evidence of these sound men leaves no room for doubt in the matter. Added to this, enough reliable statistics and Consular Reports to fill volumes are within reach of anyone who is sufficiently interested to look at them; and yet there is probably no subject of universal interest so utterly misunderstood in England as that of the respective merits of the Christian and Mohammedan cases in Macedonia.

The "balance of criminality" ! *

That lamentable utterance—lamentable because so influential and so entirely mistaken—did more to soothe to sleep the awakening interest in England than anything spoken or written at that time.

A strong man comes to your house, amuses himself by giving you a good hammering, takes any of your property he pleases and decamps.

You would go to law ?

But suppose there is no law, and nobody will listen to your complaints ; and that the man comes again and again and still hammers and robs you, leaving you weaker and poorer each time. Do you think you would be anything but a worm if you did not cherish your strength and one day catch that man, and give him such a thrashing as he would never forget ? And would you not be rather surprised if your neighbours said then that you were worse than he ?

This is not only an allegory of the racial trouble, but a fact of the personal one, and understated at that. There are worse things even than being robbed and beaten.

Any harm the Bulgarians have done to the Turks has been a vengeance for generations of cruelty of a nature unguessed at by civilised peoples. In taking this vengeance in the only way open to them the Bulgarians have never, even in their worst

* "Historic truth requires us to say that the balance of criminality lies rather with the revolutionary bands than with the Turkish Government."—(Mr. Balfour, in the House of Commons, August 14th, 1903.)

moments, approached the barbarities of which certain classes of the Turks have been guilty. Not a single case of massacre, mutilation or outrage of woman or child has been proved against the Bulgars, whereas the record of the other side in these matters is too well known to need repeating. Perhaps it is not a Christian act to kill your oppressor, but if there be any British Christian who would endure without retaliation one iota of what these people have suffered, let him judge them.



PART II.
MACEDONIA, 1904.

CHAPTER VIII.

For the Red Gods call us out and we must go!

" Funiculi, funicula—funiculi, funicula—ah!

" YOUP—ayama—ya!

" Funiculi, funicula!"

THE hearty quartette, led by a rich tenor, broke off with a couple of twangs of guitar and mandoline, and a ripple of laughter came over the glinting black water of the *Canale Grande*. The soft en-

thralling Venetian night, star-sown but moonless, held motionless gondolas, lantern-lit singing-boat, and ghostly white water-palaces in the spell of present romance. Under the slender lifted bows the oily black reflections wriggled and lapped as the shock-headed tenor stepped nimbly from thwart to thwart, cap in hand. In the carrying silence a song of women came *pianissimo* out of the enfolding blue of the crescent towards the *Rialto*—

“ *No, non e’ ver!*
 . . . *Ah, no!* ”

Our craft, nosing her halberd head among the shadow-boats, twined with slow pulse-drives through the echoing emptiness of walled water-paths and decayed-vegetable smells till she bore us in her old-world dignity and grace back to the painted posts and stone steps of the hotel.

A long London winter had gone over.

With the first winds of Spring came “the old Spring-fret,” and the long American of Samakov foregathered with me over maps and sailing-lists in the old studio, and we upset ink over the table-cloth fingering out a sea-route to our happy hunting-grounds again. There was trouble in the air, and friends in Sofia were predicting much killing and slaying in the near future.

We came across France and Italy in a hurry, got to Venice at tea-time, and were out of it before breakfast the next morning. To skip through the Queen of the Sea as if she had been Margate! What

could we have pleaded if her waters had overwhelmed us and her frescoed walls fallen on our heads for the insult? "Moro" had never seen the Water-City before, and his words were wicked as he was hustled down to the port of Trieste with a handful of cherries from a passing gondola for breakfast.

The train pushed slowly through growing corn, over which festoons of vine linked the orderly apple-trees. We crossed the Austrian frontier, wound round a stony hill, and Trieste mole stuck out into the blue below. The Austrians about this time were moving some troops into the town, and for two or three weeks there had been some very vigorous gun-drill going on. The Italians were rather nettled at this mysterious activity and were writing polite Notes to Vienna asking what it meant. The friendship on that frontier appeared to be of the formal rather than the exuberant kind, and contained a good deal of careful observation out of the corner of the eye. We tumbled on board the shapely black Austrian-Lloyd boat that was to bring us in due course to the shores of Greece, and on the tick of schedule-time the spluttering tug hauled her nose out into the basin. And there she lay for twenty minutes, till we thought it was time to ask the First Officer—who spoke English—whether they hadn't forgotten to pull up the poop-topsail anchor, to which he replied "No," which showed him to be a man of little humour. Eventually the mails came up the side and she pointed away E.S.E. down the calf of Italy's boot.

Somehow one does not expect much cleanliness in a Continental boat, but she was as spotless as the hand of man could make her. You could have enjoyed an omelette off any part of the engine-room fittings and the glint of her brass-work gave you a headache. We lunched on the serious officer's right. By some mischance he discovered that "Moro's" native place was New Orleans and fraternised bodily across my soup-plate. He was acquainted with Noo Orleans. After listening in silence to "corner of thirty-first and fifty-second streets" for half an hour, I told him confidentially that the Italians were preparing to invade Dalmatia, which had the desired effect, as the song says. He swore, with the heavy-fisted accompaniment peculiar to patriotic protests, that no sultry Italian should ever set foot upon the eastern Adriatic shore whilst there was a Slav alive. No, Sir!

On deck the warlike sailor man cooled and showed us his chart-room. "Always English charts," he said, tapping a huge sheet. "They are the best in the worrld.—Eveerrybody use them." I forgave him the street-corners on the spot.

It is rather a consoling thing in these days of the alleged Great British Slump to know that we can still manage to keep our end up at sea. It is rare to meet a European steamer whose engines were not made in the Little Islands—this hooker was built at Dumbarton—and in every sea you will find skippers of all tongues and flags swinging the indicator of the engine-room telegraph over a dial

printed with English words, from *Full Speed Ahead to Stop*.

All afternoon the sun poured down on the flat, pale-blue water. At even he dipped into a western sea of rose and gold in a glory of colour undreamed. The vision of that sunset is among the great memories of life.



At five next morning we stood on deck—unclad and unashamed—in the full blast of a hose-pipe, taking the salt Adriatic to our bosoms and gasping the sparkling air into heaving lungs. O! mighty sea-bath, that makes one five times a man! How can the miserable act of climbing into the cramped water-tin of a Cape Liner be named with this open air labation? Away with it.

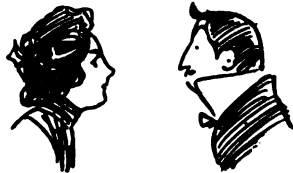
That afternoon, luxuriating under awnings, we lifted the filmy peaks of Albania, pink and mauve over the eastern water.

Down at the back of Italy's boot, where the heel is joined on, they have cobbled a patch which is called Brindisi. Into the wrinkle of this we steamed at night-fall, tied up, and went on shore. In all that blotch they call their town there is not one place where a pair of rubber-soled shoes can be bought that would not disgrace the feet of a self-respecting tramp. Weary of playing hunt-the-slipper with greasy natives, we veered towards a curtained doorway over which leaned, in letters of light, the word "*Teatro.*"

A small piece of silver insured the donor the best seat in the house for as long as he could sit in it. Fumes of garlic and other odours, from which that of soap was unavoidably absent, made of the simple act of sitting still a heroic deed. The orchestra was represented by five casual men and boys of the docker or mule-driver castes. They had no conductor and for some time gazed vacantly at the floor and ceiling. Suddenly, without warning, some fell spirit moved them. Each seized a barbarous horn or viol and wrung from it the tune he loved best. (There is a work called the "*Sinfonia Domestica*"—but no matter.) The audience endured this as one endures the hooting of a steamer before she casts off—taking it as a necessary evil. But all patience has its limit, and the spasm-band, finding they were getting themselves disliked, stopped one by one.

The curtain hitched itself up and a pink-faced man started what Dr. Richardt Strauss would call a "merry dispute" with a gentleman in blue whiskers. The drama bore the alluring title of "*Il Suicido.*" Some of the characters bore hats and were therefore presumably not attached to the household in whose front parlour the action took place; but each and all of the males carried collars to which Mr. Gladstone's in its wildest caricatures was a mere strip. There was no bending of the neck in such a park-paling of a collar—the whole body had to swing round with it when the performer glanced up R. or gazed guiltily L.C.

One of the women was rather pretty and worthy of a more elastic lover.



The awful earnestness of actors and onlookers, combined with the collars, upset our centres of gravity, and

when a nobleman in financial difficulties shot himself in the chin at the end of the first act and had a death-spasm on the floor we were disgraced before the house, and left in hilarious tears amid a hostile demonstration.

The big square outside was crowded with ugly-looking ruffians who had nothing to do but listen to one or two quack-medicine men, and the natural consequence was trouble. In one corner was a swaying crowd waving hands and shouting, and in the midst of them a pair of bristling yahoos engaged in a very pretty knife-row. One of them—a broad

animal in a fur cap—had a slash over one hand, but the other—a more nimble fighter—seemed to be untouched. The active man danced round the bulky one, who held his knife as one holds a carver. He was evidently a foreign seaman from the North. The prodding-match and its supporters worked over a considerable area in short rushes, one of which enveloped and engulfed a gentleman in the Infallible Ointment trade, whose rostrum, lamp and person sank beneath the wave. He must have waited years for such an opportunity of demonstrating the virtues of his salve on his own bruises.

The surprising thing was that the crowd—all natives—did not close in and rend the foreigner limb from limb. He must have had a very good case, for the encouraging advice was distributed about equally. Breathing noisily, and with the sweat shining on their faces, they jabbed—dodged—and broke away again. At last, just as the sailor got a dig in the shoulder, there was a yell of "police," and everyone spread.

I did not see anything of the men of law, but I saw the foreigner pass under a lamp, running hard—all for the dark dock-road.

At sea again, next morning's douche was interrupted by female shrieks and a flutter of shawls and dressing-gowns whose wearers had incautiously strayed upon the scene of ablution during a premature morning ramble. At breakfast we were received with pink averted faces and significant sniffs

The ship was running down under the coast of Albania—huge forbidding hills of rock and scrub—and turning into a quiet channel suddenly opened up a quaint little town tucked away behind an arm of land. Its name is Santa Quaranta, and it is the sea-end of a pack-trail over the mountains to the interior. We anchored in its cosy bay—it has the most perfect natural defences—and we two hailed a couple of brawny natives of the stature of Vikings, with sun-lined faces of rich tan and curled flaxen hair, who rowed us ashore. On the landing stage a couple of Turkish Customs officials and sundry shabby policemen waited for us.

I fancy everyone's curiosity on meeting the Turks for the first time is flavoured by some uneasiness. The "unspeakable" people with a vague reputation for general unpleasantness and a detailed record of evil-doings—you feel a desire to study them, and a certain misgiving as to what they are going to do about you.

You are probably agreeably surprised. A glance at the passport, smiles and bows, and the offer of a guardian to defend your frail body from all possible dangers. This last "Moro" refused in hard-gotten knowledge, and we pushed our way among pack ponies and merchandise down the choked street. All the men wore the little white Albanian skull-cap set back on their high shining foreheads. For the most part they had the thin, hawk-like features one associates with the Albanian race, which in one man are cruel—in another aristocratic. Their heads were big and intelligent, and



Santa Quaranta.

they carried themselves erect with an easy swing, which with some of them grew into a contemptuous swagger. Outside the hamlet are tumbled ruins of big buildings and forts; in the old days it must have been a formidable stronghold.

Going out to the point for a swim, we noticed a blue figure keeping us in sight while appearing not to know we were there. The possibility of visitors blowing up the mountain with dynamite had, of course, to be guarded against.

Between towering peaks and little sunny islands our turquoise sea waited, unrippled, for our cleaving stem. Far astern the mountain-walls piled in translucent rose and forget-me-not blue to the fairy pinnacles spiking the blazing sky. If you put out a finger and touched those delicate points they would snap off and splash into some dim-imagined sea behind.

In the afternoon we anchored in the bay of Corfu. White houses lined the quay-side and climbed up a bushy green hill among the palms and the cedars. Above the sweltering town one found cool avenues, and in a wide tree-bordered square some boys were playing cricket, with no bad idea of the game. Given a cutter to sail about the islands, life at Corfu might be very blissful—for a while. It is a pity we ceded the island to Greece. It would have been a capital place to put crusty Generals and aged Civil Servants.

That night the old banjo was pulled out, and sitting on the deck we greeted the half-seen shapes of the Ionian Isles as they slid by under the moon.

The "saloon" gathered in the shadows to the strains of

"Way—O—blow the man down,"

and the deck-hands grinned over the ladders.

In the brilliant freshness of the hour after dawn I woke to the roar of cable and splash of anchor, and here was Greece—as represented by the port of Patras. This time the baggage went on shore too, to be slung into the little van of the little train bound for Athens. Meanwhile the desire to swim in that wonderful placid sea was above all others, and entering some wooden hutches on piles we robed for the ceremony, then, seeking the guardian, demanded the way to the water. Back into the hutch he led, and there in the corner was a little square hole through which the bather must lower himself—and trust to luck. Once through it one stood in two feet of water, certainly, but cooped round by wooden walls. The outer boarding missed the water by four inches, and under that was the way to the open sea. This barricade ensured the safety of any dabbler unaccustomed to battling with the waves—if there ever are any waves at Patras.

In another corner of the attiring-chamber there stood a red earthen jar filled with fresh water, that those so venturesome as to dip their heads in the brine might afterwards wash out the salt withal. In half-an-hour we were clothed again and making for the station; mightily exalted, and unwilling to put up with the heat and hideousness of a railway-carriage.

The narrow line follows the southern beach of the Gulf of Corinth. A westerly breeze sprang up and stirred the water of the mountain-backed channel into the intense solid blue only to be seen in enclosed water. Little leg-o'-mutton sails tacked across it, and we cursed our folly in not taking a *caïque* down to Isthmia, instead of sitting on musty carriage-cushions by virtue of a clipped ticket. The railway folk and most of the passengers lived on the foot-board, and paid calls on each other between each of the few dozen stations. If anyone stepped on the ground by mistake he reclined quietly among the flowers till the last carriage came along, when he swung himself up by one hand, lighting a cigarette with the other.

A sponge-bag fluttered at our doorway and turned from it all would-be intruders, who doubtless regarded this as the mystic symbol of some weird Western religion whose devotees were best avoided. The devout ones were mostly engaged in the observance of a solemn feast-day, absorbing great store of medlars and other fruits of the earth.

At Corinth, which is in no way to be distinguished by eye from a hundred Levantine villages, we were disgracefully robbed through an ignorance of the qualities of the contemporaneous Greek, of which robbery is the highest. The Corinthian cutlet at four-and-twopence is not worth the money.

Through the neck of sandy soil which joins the Morea to the continent there is a cut only a few feet wide, through which trickles an inch or two

of water from the gulf to the Ægæan. Where is the canal that should carry the sea traffic from Patras to the port of Piræus, and save a three-hundred-mile run round Cape Matapan?

The afternoon wore on, and in the crawling heat



"I am English I am al-right."

we approached the Mother of Marbles, even Athens herself. Shame on us, that we should come into her presence in a train! As the contemptible conveyance slowed down the door flung wide, and there fell upon us a howling horde, filling all space and hurling themselves on the baggage in

the racks like hounds on a feeding-trough. For their agility I will say that they went out quicker than they came in. Two of the least disreputable were chosen from the snarling pack round the door and marched with the bags and banjo to the exit. Here a ravenous herd of hotel-touts, guides and unshaven coachmen wrestled, bellowing, over the suffering baggage. We attended to their knuckles with walking-sticks, laid on cunningly and with vigour, and by degrees worked our belongings on to the body of a holland-covered vehicle, whose quadrupeds looked capable of walking a mile with careful nursing. Here a complete stranger in a blue hat marked "Guide" mounted the box and took charge of everything.

"I am Engesh I am al-right tek you to Engesh 'otel," he yelled through the babel, waving the inevitable cane. He was displaced with a crook-handled walking-stick in the back of his collar, and bumped among his surging brethren. Not in the least offended by this delicate snub, he at once reappeared, introducing a person who frowned officially over printed papers, and whose features said "wrong'un" more clearly than spoken word.

"This man get your laggage through the Customs 'ouse without open—you give 'im a leedle something."

"*Oh* yes," said Moro, looking for his stick, "I'll give him a little something in just about ha'f a minute if he don't clear out o' that. *You—go—to—*" but the Travellers' Aid Society had melted into the crowd. The Customs people gave no trouble, and

rocking round the street corners of the modern town we pulled up at a hotel bearing the inspiring name of Alexander the Great. But let me counsel travellers to Athens to adopt prompt and personal violence, without any qualms, from the moment they set foot on the platform until out of hail of the station. It is the only means of keeping off the pestilent gang of roughs who are allowed to infest the place, and the only method they understand.

CHAPTER IX.

‘Brooding on ancient fame.’

THAT night was revealed the majesty of the Parthenon in the moonlight.

Dignity—purity—mystery—romance. Alone in all the world the Spirit of Dead Glory, enthroned in her Temple, remembers.

Before her the centuries stand reverently still ; she never sees them, but watches in her proud sorrow the silent, marching ghosts of the Wonders of Old Time.

Lovingly the moon bathes those ethereal pillars. Together, when the world was yet young, she and the Temple looked down on Athens and beauty, and theirs is the wisdom. Now stands the stricken Parthenon—immeasurably above earth—thanking God for blindness.

Under the spell of the Acropolis and its crown—the jewelled jewel—one finds its sordid setting of modern roofs and streets more despicable, perhaps, than they really are. Whether the clanging of the tramway gongs in the better streets or the dirt of the meaner ones is the more incongruous it is hard

to say. The new city is built over and among the ruins of the old. Turning a corner one finds some crumbling temple shouldered by shabby houses or painted villas, with broken marbles heaped among the grass and rubbish in the corners. Swarms of loathsome guides fatten on the inquisitive strangers who scramble in the ruins, pawing the flutings and intoning from red books.

“A tourist show—a legend told,”

says the Bard, of another place, and well the line fits modern Athens.

Robbery among the Greeks is not a cultivated art; it is a hereditary gift; they are all born with it. Every Greek I have ever had dealings with involving the smallest coin has tried to rob me, and many succeeded. One could as soon expect a schoolboy to throw Hackensmidt as the ordinary European to get even with a Greek over a money deal. An Athenian waiter could give any Jew alive two stone and a beating over the matter of small change, as many times as the Israelite cared to stand up. There is only one known method of getting square with them, and that is to dine twice at the same place, near the door. You pay the first night

On the site of the old Stadium of 176 B.C. stands the new one, built for the Olympian games of 1896 A.D. From the long arena the blinding white marble goes up tier on tier for a hundred feet. A cavalryman trotting high up against the sky above the topmost row was a puzzling sight till one found

that the outer wall is built up with earth, making an easy slope to the top. Inside, from the footway around the arena, rises a marble wall eight or ten feet to the first tier of seats, and against this stood in groups the Royal Bodyguard, the picturesque *Ephzōns*, white-clad, with little red caps and shoes, embroidered jackets and the spreading kilt. A charming English lady with a voice from home told me that this Greek kilt is called a *justinella*. Posed in the sun, throwing transparent blue shadows on the white marble, these picked men filled the eye finely. On an upper tier I saw a rough threatening one of them with a club. The soldier knocked it out of his hand and sandwiched the fingers of the *mauvais sujet* between his rifle-butt and the marble with a bump that set the greaser roaring like a bull.

The great amphitheatre holds eighty thousand people, and there were present that afternoon perhaps two thousand—a mere spot on its enormous space, with the look of half-a-dozen flies in a marble bath.

Suddenly there was a vigorous bugling, and in at the entrance doors came the leaders in a foot-race from Marathon, accompanied, may it please you, by enthusiasts on bicycles, who were happily stopped at the doors. The winner ran once round the arena, passed the identical laurelled statue which served the ancients for a winning post, and made his bow to the royal box. Then followed physical drill by a gymnastic squad, which the Duke of York's boys could have beaten hollow, and some average rope-climbing. An attempt at reviving

ancient traditions is worthy of all praise, but as a success——!



The Prime Minister was good enough to give us a few minutes in the cool of the late afternoon. It was a pleasure to listen to his resonant Parisian

French, rolled out in a rich bass voice. His opinions on the "situation" in Macedonia were naturally biassed, and every phase of it was studied from the Greek point of view. He said that there never was any revolution in Macedonia. The whole of the trouble consisted in the Bulgarians coming down and burning Greek villages. He believed, as all the Greeks do, that their nationality is in the majority in the distressful land, and that the Bulgarians are agitating solely with a view of possessing a country to which they have no claim. The poor Greeks, he said, are not allowed to arm themselves, and are at the mercy of the bloodthirsty bands. Therefore they warn the nearest Turkish troops whenever a band appears in their neighbourhood, as their only means of protection.

The Premier admitted that the Turks had done a certain amount of damage, and in some cases nearly as much (!) as the Bulgars. Touching the new Gendarmerie scheme, he was not optimistic.

"To begin with, how is it possible that the officers of five different nationalities should agree? Assuredly it is the best idea proposed up to the present, but I have grave doubts as to its success."

Under the roof of Alexander the Great we shared our luncheon-table with an octogenarian globe-trotter, who had been on the move for nineteen years. His habiliments suggested the brotherhood of them that stalk the elusive butterfly. But whilst his knowledge of the hereditary and acquired tastes of winged insects was fathomless, he did not despise the humble science of military strategy,

and showed clearly with forks and salt-cellars in what a ridiculously simple manner the position of Spioen Kop could have been captured and held. Like many others with whom this particular demonstration used to be a hobby, he forgot to allow for the presence of several Boers, who I believe were there at the time of the action, and who might have hindered even five hundred *Times* historians.

There is something repulsively interesting about the guides of Athens. After close study of the species, I came to the conclusion that all the venom of these vampires is contained in a small cane which each carries, and without which no guide ever appears in public. Armed with this cane he becomes a magician, fraught with boundless powers of evil. Take from him his ogre's staff and he turns into a harmless citizen. I have no doubt that many of the ordinary people we met stickless in the streets—some even with families—had only to go home and take up their fell wand to be transformed at its touch into hideous beasts of prey, luring helpless tourists into dark purlieus and devouring them.

Along the side walks sit the local thirst-quellers behind large flagons of green liquid, crowned by a lemon lest the public mind should forget that it is meant for lemonade. To create in the heedless passer-by a vision of cooling draughts of nectar, a tinkling of glasses is kept up by a little arrangement of revolving balls which has lured generations of greedy Greeks to death by poisoning.

Walking behind a handsome *Ephzōn* at the palace

gateway, Moro was admiring his smart kit, when he turned round and observed, "Glad you like it." Balaam's surprise on a historic occasion could have but faintly compared with our amazement. A corporal of the Greek Guard talking English! He showed his white teeth in a broad smile and explained that before his turn of service he had been in the United States, and was glad to meet up with anyone who talked the lingo.

"Regiment? Photographs? Sure! Come along!"

In the grey-walled courtyard of the Palace, under a verandah, lolled three or four of the quarter-guard, their tassel-gartered white tights thrust out in front of them. At a word from the corporal (who was in charge) two of them dived into the cool guard-room and swaggered out with their rifles, grinning. The three stood for the "snap," and a man in a neat blue undress was hailed from the barrack-rooms across the courtyard for a place in the next group. When they walked the many-pleated *justinella* fluff-fluffed in front of them to the knee-action, like a ballerina's skirt. I would have paid half-a-sovereign to see a company in line march across that square. The corporal was an entertaining as well as an obliging warrior, and when we finally left him, presented us with a photo of himself signed with his distinguished but quite unreadable name. Fine fellas, the *Ephzōns*.

The sailing of steamers from Piræus appeared to be such a haphazard matter that no one would undertake to prophesy about it; consequently, one



An Ephῶν.—Drill order. [To face page 140.



Salonica boat got away without her purpose having leaked out. One afternoon, however, Alexander's head bottle-washer sprang upstairs in consuming strides with the news that a vessel of known virtue might leave for Turkey that very evening.

So good-bye to Athens, where glory dwells amid middle-class gentility, like the Apollo Belvedere in a seedy frock-coat. Looking back across the plain, the One Gem stood alone among the everlasting hills, coloured tea-rose in the sunset.

Piræus is a flourishing port. Bales and stores crowd its busy quays, and cargo boats of all the flags pack its basins. A dirty Greek packet was our Argosy, and a dog-hole six feet by four our portion of it. Crowds of ill-visaged Turks and forbidding Greeks swarmed all over the decks and there was barely standing room. Of course our kennel door had no lock, so we stood sentry over it by turns till the shore contingent returned to earth and the ocean greyhound swung her head to the sea. The deck had cleared in the mysterious way it always does on leaving port, and there was room for a walk round. Leaning over the rail was a short, middle-aged man in good clothes and neat boots, who turned out to be an old acquaintance of Moro's, and none other than the late private secretary of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan of Turkey. He was on his way to his ancestral acres at Volo, and very disgusted at having missed the previous boat, an Italian, and "at least clean."

At the summons of a tin bell all descended into a dark den and dealt with a procession of greasy

meats encouraged on their way by draughts of diluted turpentine of a rich ruby hue. Both were abundant but intimidating. The thick, sticky atmosphere pressed upon us, heavy with the smell of boiling oil. As our bed-box opened out of this salubrious retreat we decided not to risk asphyxiation, and laid rugs on deck in the lee of the wheel-house.

I opened my eyes at dawn and beheld all round me shrouded forms. Half-awake, I stared at the uncanny shapes in horror, wondering in whose family vault I had been laid to rest. One of the bodies emitted a loud snore, and as two bells struck consciousness of comparative safety returned. Moro slept like a hog, till half-an-hour later we ran between two points of land and anchored. Tumbling into a shore boat we pulled half a mile from the steamer ; in four fathoms of clear green water you could see the little shelves of white sand on the bottom, and we dived straight down into the cool depth of it.

All that drowsy day the ship ran through little grey islands dotted with bright-green bushes to the still water's edge, behind them on one side the rock-cliffs of Eubœa, on the other the coast of Greece. Later, Moro's friend concocted tea, and we sat astride the benches with the cups between us whilst he unfolded "Leaves from a Life."

His Imperial Majesty and his private secretary, you must know, had had a little tiff, and people who have tiffs with the Sultan never go back again to see how things are getting on at dear old Yildiz.

It is not etiquette. In fact, as a general rule, they never go anywhere or see anything to speak of after a difference of opinion with that rather touchy old gentleman, and Penley *Bey*, as we will call him, considered himself remarkably lucky, after various vicissitudes, to be sailing back to his old home once more. He had no craving to plant the sole of his foot on even the remotest patch of Turkish soil again, as in that moment he might bid adieu to life and lovely Laura, so to speak, for the long arm of co-influence would twine affectionately round his neck and draw him gently behind the *jalousies*, and this world would see Penley *Bey* no more.

It was noticeable that one or two of the sinister-faced Turks aforementioned frequently admired so much of the view as could be seen from the neighbourhood of our tea-party, and it was also remarkable that at such times our conversation turned lightly on the weather. Only when these scene-stricken gentlemen had temporarily vanished did our interesting friend unburden himself.

“ I know these people as well as they know me,” he observed, munching a biscuit and waving his spoon airily towards the companion-hatch, “ but they don't know *that*. My dear sir, as soon as they can get to the telegraph wire at Salonica it will be known at Constantinople that I left the ship at Volo. And much good may it do them all.”

The habits and customs of the Morbid Monarch are not known to everyone, so I will set down a few of them. They are mostly actuated by the ever-present fear of sudden death, which impels him,

inter alia, to drive to the Selamlik in a bomb-proof carriage, closely surrounded by armed guards. The persons who are privileged to watch this proceeding from a safe distance are very carefully looked after by police emissaries, who stand in the crowd and suppress the slightest suspicious movement. No one is allowed to put up a pair of field-glasses, far less to possess a camera or sketch-book. This is the only appearance (if it can be called an appearance) which Abdul Hamid makes out of doors.

Within the walls of the Palace he feels no more security than outside. Not more than three or four of his most trusted subjects have access to him. His Albanian bodyguard are a source of constant terror to him. On various occasions when some Albanian question has come up for settlement, a threat of revolt and assassination from these protectors of his Royal Person has compelled him to order it according to their wish. At such times of disturbance he will sleep in a different room each night, and not a soul in the palace will know in what quarter of it he is to be found. An underground dungeon, a corner of the roof, an arbour in the garden—in any unlikely hiding-place will he secrete himself, in this terror of murder which is on him night and day. His food, which he takes alone, is first tested on some pet dog; often the bearer of it is commanded to eat some before his Imperial master is emboldened to touch the dish.

This is no mere mania. There are few of those

sly schemers at Yildiz who would not gladly see him dead. His extraordinary personal influence and his almost sacred character as head and centre of the Mohammedan religion have so far saved him. But I have heard more than one of his subjects darkly remark, discussing the power of the Palace, "All men must die—some soon."

On the sea-front at Volo we drank "a run of luck" to Penley *Bey*, gentleman and good fellow, and left him to return to his family and estates after fifteen stirring years.

The peak of Mount Pelion, cloud-capped, lifted astern as the ship drove out of the gulf of Volo into a stiff head wind. In the night she passed Ossa, and by breakfast time was opening up the gulf of Salonica. With great solemnity Moro and I, in the sanctity of our bunk-house, padded our clothing and pockets with books, maps and diaries, which things the Turk does not consider fit or proper objects to be introduced into his country. Each staggered on deck with the midriff measurements of Daniel Lambert and the fat boy of Peckham combined. Behind me was strapped the faithful but obtrusive Webley, and each great-coat pocket sagged brazenly with fifty rounds of ammunition in little boxes.

Notwithstanding which we got through.

"Contra-band!"
"Oh dear No!"



CHAPTER X.

Behold, they clap the slave on the back, and behold, he ariseth a man

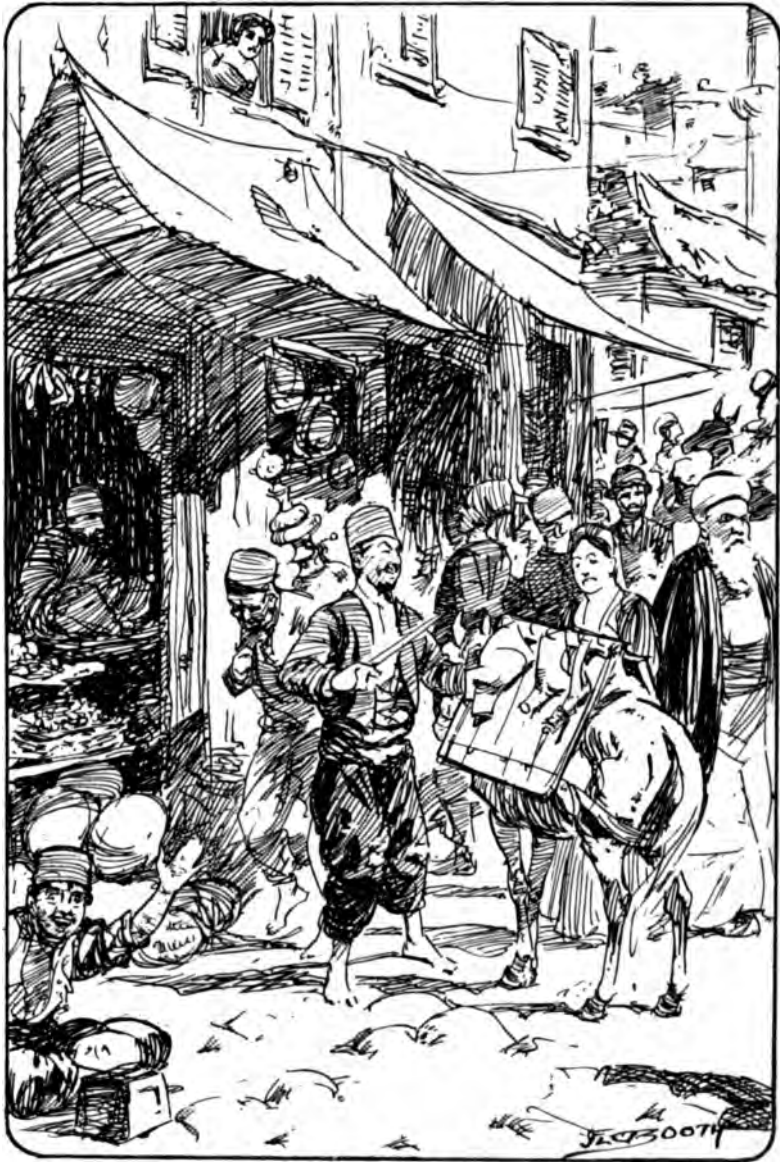
SALONICA lies on a hillside. A jumble of roofs, mosque domes and white minarets, and at the top green gardens and the old embattled walls. Behind and around, more dusty hills. From the sea the first thing to catch the eye is the *Bias Kula* (White Tower) at the east end of the sea front, shaped like the old Pictish castles and reflected, with the long line of whitewashed houses, in the calm of the bay. Between the walls and the water dwell men and women of all peoples and tongues. Bulgarians, Servians, Albanians, Vlachs, Armenians, Anatolians, Circassians, Greeks, Turks, Jews, infidels and heretics of every land and language. Between and among these are sprinkled the races of civilised Europe, and in one exalted avenue, locally known as Consulate Row, live the representatives of their Governments.

The Greeks—always the money-makers—own the hotels and the Europe shops. The Jews control the antiquities industry and the maritime traffic. The Turks sit in high places and obstruct trade as long as passive resistance does not interfere with a

life of gentlemanly ease. The rest of the collection are allowed to live and ought to be grateful for it. Each "quarter" is in its appropriate place—Jews near the waterside, where they can get to their boats; Turks on the top of the hill, where they may gaze philosophically on the world and are not overlooked; Greeks in the pockets of the population. In odd corners which nobody else wants are dumped the Bulgarians and such like. Along the sea front are the hotels and a centre of delirious gaiety known as the *Alhambra*, where the frivolously-inclined sit among little tables on iron chairs on the gravel and watch a dingy travelling company extinguishing "*La Vie de Bohême*."

Perilously near the sacred abodes of the consuls is another open-air stage, where a plump and popular French lady was wont to present a song and dance, in which she gave an entrancing imitation of the barking of a dog. One night there was a difference of opinion between the Jews and Turks present as to whether the canine cadenza should be delivered or not, which ended with the entrance of the police, the flying exit of the Jews and the closing of the local "Empire" for the rest of the season.

The top of the best street is roofed in to make a *bazar*, and in its shadow the crowded open-fronted shops spread their contents on the cobbles. Fruit piled in heaps, trousers and walking-sticks, bakers' counters with meat pasties, pointed shoes and lemonade, gaudy rugs, copper pans and comic-opera hats. *Fez* and turban pass the European "straw" in the crowd, and amongst them steers the bice-green head-dress



A street in Salonica.

of a sallow-faced Jewess, hanging down her back in a kind of a long narrow bag. On Saturdays—the Jewish Sabbath—the Israelite colony of course does no work. It parades in families, facing ninety-five in the shade in long fur-lined coats and girt about with many ornaments. The Levantine Jew has not what we call “Jewish features.” A distinctive type he certainly is, but difficult of classification. There is something of the Slav in his square, short-nosed face, but only in isolated cases does he suggest the Spaniard whose language he talks, and whose music he uses.

Sitting on the hotel balcony one night, I was surprised to hear, coming up from the water, the quaint air of a Spanish dance played on a concertina by one of the Jew boatmen. Every night his crew pulled up and down—a shadow-mass on the quiet water—till I knew the air by heart, but I never felt the barrel-organ boredom that the naked word “concertina” might suggest.

Much of the marketing of Salonica is done on the move. The butcher, clutching a pair of scales, hauls a veteran pony roofed like a dog kennel, on which roof hang the component parts of a lamb. With their bread-crumbs coating of dust and delicate flavouring of flies the tasty joints are eagerly sought after. The local milkman, with shouts of “*Haidt*,” * propels a staggering ass, burdened with bulging goat-skins from which he taps into a small tin measure. The hideous war-cry of his London brother is to him unnecessary, for the far sweeter

* “Go on.”

voice of the milk-moke tells all mankind who comes.

About a year before, the Bulgarians had shown their contempt for a quiet life by blowing the Otto-



Abdul.

man Bank sky-high, and holding a sort of *bataille de fleurs* with bombs for bouquets. Salonica, like the lady who has had mumps and feels sure it is coming on again, was just then going through qualms of anxiety, and her poor nerves were in

such a state that any shock would have sent her into hysterics. At each street corner, on an infirm rush stool, sat a soldier of the Empire in a state of mental lethargy, his trusty weapon on his bended knee. It was his cherished privilege to explode this arm against the person of any Bulgarian who showed a disposition to blow up banks or otherwise irritate our lady of Salonica. That he was not called upon to take this step was no fault of his own, and he was grievously disappointed, a day's Bulgar-shooting being one of his favourite sports. As I grew to know Abdul better I discovered in him many qualities of which at first blush one would not have suspected him. Decidedly appearances are against him, and without his rifle he has an unclassified look which might lead the hasty observer to put him down as a tramp. His covering (uniform is the last word with which to describe it) is usually of a dull roan relieved with grey patches, and varies in colour effect from a moor in the twilight to a thunderstorm at sea.

Once a year a brand new blue costume is supposed to be served out, which lasts about four months, after which Abdul has to patch up the holes with what he can find and hold up the patches with string. As soldiering in the Turkish army is largely a sedentary pursuit the most frequently-renewed repairs are on the rear of the trousers, which are usually shrunk to a painful tightness. Should his jacket be of recent issue many of the original buttons remain, but in the more fashionable back numbers these are replaced by bits of stick

or dispensed with altogether. The question of footwear is left to the individual taste, which works over a large range. The white socks and skin sandals of the peasant will adorn the twinkling feet of number one, setting off the bare ankles and split shoes of number two, while number three's artistic fancy leans to a torn trouser and slipper on one leg and a high boot with a large shoe over it on the other.

In feature and expression Abdul differs from our standards of manly beauty, and could safely be turned loose in Hyde Park without inflaming the hearts of the nursemaids, though he might be the cause of convulsions among their charges. In the Anatolian regiments especially, a man with an unbroken nose is looked upon by his comrades as vulgarly conspicuous, whilst much of the winning playfulness of their smile depends upon having two or more good gaps in their front teeth. But as he does not mind much whether he is paid, cares very little when he is fed, and not at all how he is clad, Abdul is the ideal soldier for the Turk's administration, whose economy in these matters is one of the most noticeable features of his system.

With great trumpeting the carnival figure of "Reform" had once more made its appearance in Macedonia. Hard-pressed by the Powers, the Sultan dressed up the image in the cloak of Concession, clad his feet in the boots of Financial Grants, and pulled the hat of Promises over his eyes till he looked very like the Real Thing. Then

he set an Inspector-General to hold him up, and pushed him into the ring. The Powers, for their part, thought he was as good an imitation as they could expect, and sent twenty-five trusty men and more to make him alive.

The first thing these men did was to try and fashion him some real internal organs that would work (eventually) by themselves; which, if you think of it, was a big job, because anything the figure had in that line were mere shreds that had never been alive. The one they started on was called the *Gendarmerie Impèriale Ottomane*.

The head doctor, called de Giorgis, was a man skilled in the making of that particular organ, and those who strove with him were accounted clever surgeons, and worked for the most part with their heads and hands, and some of them had faith. The inward knowledge of the making was not given to all, and in some the will was lacking, but by the sweat of those who gave head and hand and heart to the task, in due time this particular organ had life. Driven by its makers, the *Gendarmerie Impèriale Ottomane* worked inside the great image of Reform, which began to look yet a little more like the Real Thing.

But the other internal organs of the figure which lay around the new-born member were untouched, and their stagnation crippled its action. The nearest and most important was called *Financial Control*, and this was as the other had been, a shred without life. So the head doctor called on the Powers and said: "Send others to make this

dead thing alive that it may work as ours works, and not overlie and smother what we have created.”

The Powers are sending.

So the image, for want of its other organs, is not yet living and working, and some call it a failure. Whereas the wonder is that it has not been buried long ago.

The building up of the Gendarmerie was worth watching. Round Macedonia were dotted the European officers—the Russians at Salonica, the Austrians at Uskub, the French at Seres, the Italians at Monastir, and the British at Drama—five officers to each. From these centres they spread to the outlying posts of their districts, and gradually gathered in, weeded out, clothed, taught, armed and drilled the scarecrows who were to be made into a force.

A good deal of this was done at the school at Salonica, where the practical work was in charge of Major Bonham of the Grenadier Guards. In that collection of nationalities and petty jealousies he rode with so clever a hand that they buckled to and worked with each other for him. He had ‘the way’ with him.

Officers and men, the Turks went through the course and were shaped. They came in ignorant ; without pride, discipline or interest. The life of a gendarme (“ duties ” is too big a word) up to then consisted in having as comfortable a time as possible in the hill village to which he was posted, and making what he could out of the inhabitants ;

wherein he only imitated his superiors, and could therefore hardly be blamed. He helped himself by virtue of his decrepit *Martini*, whose ten-pound pull was never interfered with by any range practice. Officers knew nothing of their commands, rarely or never visited their posts, and lived a life of ease undisturbed by the worries of business. What they or their men did mattered to nobody. Imagine the rude shock to their systems when they found they were to be "organized"—a process distasteful to any self-respecting Turk—and still worse, by Europeans. Christians—*Giaours*—infidels. But in a wonderfully short time most of them recovered from the shock and came down with their men into the school. The men, on the whole, felt important and rather pleased. Somebody was taking notice of them, and thought it worth while to show them strange things, such as the cleaning of rifles and the aiming of the same. They were willing to learn—even keen. The officers were given books and soon knew enough to teach the men.

Their methods on parade are not ours, but then we have not got Abdul to cope with. To draw attention to any *faux pas* in the ranks the native officer will cast stones at the offender, who stands conscious of wrong but outwardly unharmed, whilst the shins of his neighbours bear his punishment. Or on a particularly hot day the wrong-doer will be told to run.

"Whither, O *Yuzbashi*?"

"Anywhere, and with great speed."

So the half-fledged gendarme starts at a shuffling double for the edge of the parade-ground, to be ordered back when he gets there, "with greater speed than before." He arrives blowing and perspiring at the unwonted exertion, clutching his dangling bayonet and unstable nether garments, and wishing that stone-throwing were the only punishment adopted by the authorities.

Christian gendarmes are a failure. They are not used to carrying arms, and life-long subjection to the Turks has made them unfit for a post of authority. In time, when the body is a force, they may be possible.

At first it was made something of a point by the Powers that Christians should be used, and Hilmi Pasha, the Inspector-General of Reforms, obligingly sent one to a remote Turkish village to quell a disturbance, since when, I believe, nothing has been heard of him.

In their districts the British officers were looked upon by the population as judges and fathers, and Colonel Fairholme, Commandant of the contingent, was constantly besought by the citizens of Drama to settle their domestic differences. The Turkish Act—or whatever it is—under which these officers serve, forbids them to do anything but technically-instruct gendarmes, but gradually by natural evolution they found themselves practically "running" the towns in which they were stationed. The rescue by Captain Hamilton of a wrongfully-imprisoned Greek at Kavala gained for him great *kudos* among the Christian inhabitants of that port. A man

with a head, who could be depended upon, was such a novelty that the big birds of the various neighbourhoods, as well as the ground game, flocked to them for advice. All this time they strove with the gendarmes till by-and-by these began to feel conscious of a backbone, and to do things off their own bats.

A notorious Kavala thief was caught in the act one day, and took to the sea in his boat. After him followed one of the new-made men in another boat, and several inhabitants. As the thief tried to pick them off with a firearm these last dropped out of the hunt and the man with the backbone pulled on alone, under fire. Getting within speaking distance he called on the thief to surrender, and this being refused, shot him dead. For this act of duty the gendarme was imprisoned by the Turkish authorities, and freed and subsequently promoted by the British. All of which had a great and desirable effect on his brothers-in-arms and the populace of those parts, who saw that the New Gendarmerie was for practical use and protection.

There are still plenty of brigands left in Turkey, who live, according to the time-honoured custom of their profession, by robbery and blackmail. It is a life which especially appeals to the sporting instincts of the Albanian, and the most prominent little coteries are composed of these dashing gentlemen. An Englishman in Salonica was so unfortunate as to own a large farm in an unfrequented part of the Monastir district. Upon this rural retreat descended periodically a congregation of



THE OLD AND NEW
GENDARMERIE

brigands on business, who made themselves a settlement on the property, and discouraged argument in the usual manner. The chief, a man of great culture who could read and write, then indited a letter to the owner in Salonica naming the exact sum which would tempt him to leave for home, and hinting in a postscript his misgivings as to probable barrack damages in the event of said funds missing the post.

“Why don't you get the Government to send troops up and clear them out?” asks the simple stranger.

“Because, my dear friend, they would disappear before the troops arrived, and reappear the moment they left.”

At odd intervals a few brigands are netted, and housed in the *Bias Kula* on the sea front, where they can be seen peering between the bars of the narrow windows, with dingy soldiers sprawling against the wall below them and squatting on the roof above. The most successful way of dealing with a chief is to give him a high post—such as Collector of Customs, with the chance of gathering in his salary departmentally, and thus make it worth his while to keep quiet. Several notorious brigands are now enjoying life in snug Government billets under a wise Sultan.

Every European country of importance owns a Post Office at Salonica, which is considered—like the Consulate—a part of the country to which it belongs. The English mail-bags come out of the train or the mail-boat straight into the office, only

the parcels being subject to a Customs examination. The outgoing letters bear English postage stamps, and are date-stamped "British Post Office, Salonica." As it seemed that letters might go to any of a round dozen of offices, we also visited the Turkish, French, Austrian and a few more on the off chance, and sometimes ran an odd letter to ground in one of them.

Our hotel was a most scrupulously - managed establishment, as may be gathered from the following instructions for the behaviour of its guests, translated from the French :

I. *Misters the travellers who descend at our hotel are requested to hand over any money or articles of value they may have to the management.*

There is a frankness about this which almost robs it of its sting.

II. *Those who have no baggage musi pay every day, whereas those who have it may only do so once a week.*

III. *Political discussions and playing musical instruments are forbidden, also all riotous conversation.*

IV. *It is permitted neither to play at cards nor at any other hazardous game.*

V. *Children of families and their servants should not walk about in the rooms.*

The choice of crawling along the floor or being

carried by the families is thus left to each servant's individual taste.

VI. *It is prohibited to present one's self outside one's room in dressing-gown or other neglected costume.*

X. *Travellers, to take their repose,* descend to the dining-room, with the exception of invalids, who may do it in their rooms.*

XI. *A double-bedded room pays double, save the case when the traveller declares that one bed may be let to another person. It is, however, forbidden to sleep on the floor.*

Having added a twelfth commandment as to the penalties attached to drinking soup out of the soap-dish or throwing the wardrobe out of the window, we proceeded to break the third enactment in all its clauses, and the banjo did what she could to assert her independence.

The best thing about Salonica was the bathing. In those windless days the town was a stew-pan. Under the merciless sun, a thick soaky heat filled streets and houses, and the only escape was in the cool outer water of the bay. The same old Jew-boatman each morning pushed away at his oars till the green awning-shaded boat was out past the mole, and then overboard we went. Swimming out into the bay the first time, I saw a white cloud above the horizon, and over it—a shade bluer than the sky—a faint white-laced peak, so intangible as to seem a part of the cloud. It was the very

* *Repos*, an obvious misprint for *repas*.

home of the gods—Olympus. Unconnected with sea or earth, its peak hung poised in the sky with the sun shining through the haze on the snow.

In the inner bay lay one of the toothless leviathans of the Turkish Navy. She was officially described as a battleship, but report denied her either guns or engines that were anything but scrap-iron. For years she had swung to the same moorings; no smoke had curled from her funnels, and no European had been allowed on board of her. Now and then a boat came on shore from her, its crew turning their hands forward instead of backward to feather—Turkish Navy-fashion—but what they did on board none knew. No shore-boat was allowed to approach her.

She lay perhaps five furlongs from the mole, and what was more simple than to swim off, leaving one's boat a couple of hundred yards away, and to arrive in an exhausted condition at the bottom of her side-ladder? So far, so good. The sentry, entirely taken in by the palsied clutchings at the grating and the raucous breathings, allowed the fainting swimmer to draw himself up a few steps of the ladder. After a breathing space the naked humbug staggered to his feet, and gazing under his hand for the erring boat, which was under his nose, mounted a few more steps to get a better view. At this point the sentry's humane instincts were overcome by his stern sense of duty, and he advanced to the top of the ladder, waving the unauthorised person back. The wet one—now seeking his boat on the most distant horizon—care-

fully saw none of these signs and backed up the steps till his skin met the scandalised guardian's outstretched hand, who raised a furious voice in protest and brought his fellow-minions on a dead run. This seemed the time for the dignified retirement to begin, but before he bowed to superior force the explorer was rewarded by the sight of a wedge of deck and an undeniable gun of the Hotchkiss type, though whether it worked he can't say from a superficial inspection. The people in that ship were most disagreeable, and came out with rifles and things, besides using uncalled-for language to the boatman when he picked up their late visitor under the stern. They made poor old Isaac quite nervous.

One afternoon came the news we were waiting for. We were drinking tea in the most comfortable house in Consulate Row with the three merry men its inmates, and the Man in Authority had had a telegram. At Koumanova, near Uskub, there had been a fight and twenty-four insurgents had been killed by Turkish troops. How much was fight and how much slaughter was unknown. The insurgents were supposed to be Servians. But whoever they were there was something to go and see about, and prospects of more to follow, so the next morning we presented ourselves before His Excellency Hilmi Pasha, Governor-General, for permission to travel in the "Interior." The worthy Pasha had not much to say to us, possibly because Moro had called him a liar in one of his last year's articles, though most Turks would consider that a subject for pride. We gathered that the Interior

was in its usual state of blissful calm ; that the repatriation (horrible word) of refugees was going on under the most happy conditions ; that all their wrecked houses had been or were being rebuilt by the Turks and made nice and comfortable for them ; that there was no such thing as an insurgent in the country, and finally, that deep peace brooded over all.

“ We have their word for all these things.
No doubt their words are true,”

says the Bard. We told his Excellency that for the moment the one wish of our hearts was to behold this happy homecoming with our own eyes, and put to shame the ill-natured British newspapers that doubted. Of course, like a true Turk, he walked round and round the question. We had heard it—anyone would tell us—what need to go ? It was dangerous—even uncomfortable. Bad hotels, —fevers—brigands—captures—ransoms ! (Would nothing choke off these obstinate mules of mad English ?) Well, then, it was not in his power to grant such a permit.

“ Higher authority—Constantinople—no answer for weeks . . .” And there, always indefinite, he left it. In plain English it meant : “ You shan’t have it.”

In my childhood’s days I was often fed on the salutary saw : “ If you can’t get what you want, go without.”

Putting a slightly different construction on it to that intended by the author, we did.

CHAPTER XI.

Inland among dust, under trees—inland where the slayer may slay him.

OF course there was a rush for the train. Moro at the last moment found he had not packed enough white shirts or dress-ties or some such indispensable, and in the end we were bouncing over the stones at full gallop with three minutes to do a mile in.

At the miserable shed-and-a-half of a station—the end of the line from Paris—country folk sat about on huge bundles, waiting—as ever—for permission to move; green-collared police nosed over printed permits; soldiers lounged with bayoneted rifles at the gates, or jostled without them on the platform; and the railway-staff looked on. Need I say we had forty minutes to wait? At last the peasants and their bundles were hustled into their dens, the soldiers coaxed into theirs; and the train, due to start about half-past eleven Turkish, which was then about half-past six a.m. English, got under way about 7.15—latish.

The Turks reckon their time from sunset, which they call twelve o'clock, and consequently if a Turk tells you something happened at half-past ten at night some years ago, you have to get an

almanack to find out whether it was really half-past two or five o'clock a.m. Time therefore goes a great pace in the Autumn and very slowly in the Spring. If a Turk is late for dinner in November he has only to say "I'm awfully sorry! My watch is the day before yesterday;" which is held to be a perfectly valid excuse.

The normal state of Turkey is stagnation, and everyone who wants to move about must expect work. So long as he sticks to the railway-line a man may start with no more trouble than having his name, profession, age, size, colour of hair and eyes, shape of nose, mouth and chin, and detailed intentions entered on a beautiful document all over wriggles and flourishes called a *teskari*—to be shown at all demands—and the inscribing and official stamping of his own passport with the name of the town he proposes to honour with a visit. *But*—if he is allowed to leave the railway and penetrate that mysterious "Interior," he will not be let off with such a mere glance of recognition as this. Means will be found to label and classify every inch of him, and to define every foot of his progress, and that he may not deviate from his appointed path guards of honour will compass him about, and take particular care that he shall only look where he ought to. Our *teskaris*, without which we should not have been allowed to get into the train, franked us as far as Uskub on the main line. Once there it was our business to find a way out.

The line goes up the valley of the Vardar; over the bare levels—along river banks fringed with

acacia and willow—through deep gorges and rock-arches topped with green, out into a fertile country of waving cornfields with grey hills behind.

At every culvert and corner on the line was a bit of thatch on two sticks and a ragged figure presenting arms beside it. The insurgents were putting in a little casual train-wrecking in their off-time, and these posts were there to interrupt them. At the baked country stations we bored through the throng of soldiers and people to buy salty sausages, and a draught of cold water from the red earthen pitchers in a row by the railings. More troops got in at every station. At Kuprili, half way up, a company of Albanians boarded the crowded ovens in the rear of the train, tumbling in—twenty deep—with yells of laughter. At another place a guard of honour presented arms to a little creature with bent back and a mean face. Gorgeous in Russian army cap, white jacket and gold buttons, he answered the salute and picked his way to his reserved carriage. A Consul in full fig! The worst thing about him was a pair of horrible imitation butcher-boots made out of shiny spat-leggings over bad shoes. Behind him towered a huge Albanian *Kavass* in the white kilt of his country, bristling with knives and pistols to protect the Civil Servant of the Bear.

In a thunderstorm and heavy, glorious rain we made Uskub about two o'clock. Passports promptly annexed by the police.

Gardens and white houses near the station, and close-packed wood-fronted *boutiques* round the

market and the old town. From our bedroom at the *Hôtel Turati* we looked across a wide deserted cemetery, unwalled and meshed with footpaths, where starved dogs howled mournfully all night.

In the *salle-à-manger* were the Austrian officers of the Turkish Gendarmerie. Their colonel was a hawk-nosed, hawk-eyed man—a martinet. One of them, who had lived in a Bloomsbury boarding-house, discussed Hungarian horses in good English, and by degrees was drawn to talk about the matter which had brought us there. It happened at a village four hours away. He and his brother officers had missed the affair by an hour, but thought it was a square fight. The villagers—Bulgarians—of course knew nothing of the dead insurgents, but swore they were Servians. The village was full of Turks—he didn't know how many—and they had fought all day. The others had used dynamite freely.

Officially those Austrian men were not popular. Their country is stretching out tentacles over Albania and Western Macedonia, ready to grapple and hold fast when the excuse comes, and is making itself a soft couch ready to lie on. The Turks don't like it, for obvious reasons; the Albanians don't like it, having no desire to be grappled; the Bulgarians and Servians, both very thick at that corner, have other ideas as to the parcelling out of a free Macedonia, and they don't like it at all. In spite of its spending powers the Austrian propaganda is distinctly unpopular; and the officers, who were hardly put there merely to drill gendarmes,

shared its odium and stood a very good chance of getting shot by one or other of the dissenting parties. The colonel actually was shot not long afterwards.

Up the road, at the new Roman Catholic Church (kindly built by the Austrians), a crowd of gala-dressed Albanians gathered one morning for the feast of *Corpus Christi*. After the service in the Church a procession wound round the churchyard singing, and kneeling at a shrine in each corner. In front walked a company of pretty little girls, some in white—some in Turkish *shalvas** of crimson or green, and sashes of brilliant colours. They threw flowers before the priest and laughed at the sunshine and the fun of it all. The women—most serious—bent their white-draped heads over their books or held a dribbling candle away from their Sunday clothes. Their black skirts were short enough to show checked or speckled *shalvas*, white ankles and bulky shoes. When they knelt the unbending crinoline thrust its covering into black roofs and mountain peaks round the devout body. In the fore-front of the battle Colonel Hawkeye and his officers carried candles for the good of their country with conspicuous gallantry.

Over the Vardar bridge streams of ponies and ox-carts poured in to market. Cross-legged between two bales of charcoal sat an old Bulgarian, swaying to the motion of his pony. As the little hairy animal pit-patted past the guard-house at the end of the bridge, the sentry rolled forward,

* Loose trousers.

stopped and questioned him, then dragged out a handful of charcoal from his load and sent him on his way. The Turkish soldier takes toll of any Christian property he chooses. I have seen a



peasant arrive in a town with a great pannier of cherries, and by the time he reached the market he had hardly a pound left to sell. Every second soldier in the street took a fistful as the pannier

passed, and two or three times he was made to turn out the whole lot by the roadside in a search for imaginary contrabrand.

On a sloping, uneven spread of ground at the eastward end of the town, the goods and chattels, carts, oxen, ponies and paraphernalia of the market-folk were gathered. At the side and back the bare-trodden hill went up to barracks, and in the hollows the brown-jacketed Albanians argued and punched thin cows, or watched sore-backed ponies careering up and down, manes and tails flying and heads jerked in the air by the heavy-fisted urchins who "showed them off." Make and shape go for nothing—the healthy-looking pony is generally a hopeless slug—and no Macedonian wastes time feeling legs or studying shoulders. "Let's see him move" is the only demand, and away goes the terrified little spindle-shanks at 2,000 feet-seconds muzzle velocity. Buyer and seller wag hands over their bargain as our folks do at home, and then repair to a *kiosk* where the Turkish official relieves the late owner of ten per cent. of the purchase-money. For five or six pounds you could get the best pony in the district. There were some useful "packers" to be had for four.

About the hour of sunset we were plodding up the hill to examine as much of the barracks as might be seen without over-exciting the inhabitants, when a distant sound like the deep voices of many aged sheep, punctuated with a measured thudding, stole on the stillness of the scented air. From behind a house emerged a gang of men blowing

into large brass instruments, followed by the youth and beauty of a regiment of Anatolian *Redifs*.* At the bottom of the hill the martial melody ceased out of regard for the lungs of its producers, and the column marched up the hill past us.

I have seen men in different parts of the world



Anatolians.

who might claim to be ugly, but as those people passed it seemed to me that every man of them was uglier than anyone I had ever seen before. Some of the sergeants had evidently been through a course in the German Army, and strutted with pointed toes at the German parade-step. Outside

* Reserves.

the barracks the battalion halted and turned into line, after which the companies were inspected and unblushingly reported "all correct." On this comforting assurance a brief but terrible braying burst from the band, said to represent a piece of the *Hamidi* march. This was speedily hushed, and the entire regiment raised its raucous voice in a shout of "*Padisha chok yasha*," which means "May the Sultan live many years." Twice were these orchestral and vocal efforts encored before the performers were allowed to retire indoors with the satisfied air of having done sufficient damage for one day. Every garrison in the Empire parades at sunset to go through this ceremonial.

It is not easy to take a Turkish band seriously, but I have met one or two which were not beyond the bounds of reason. Even in these the instruments—nearly all basses—differed widely in pitch, but behind the out-of-tunanimity there is a strong, unique character in their music. Generally in a minor key, it is weird, grim and full of evil foreboding. If one imagines it as incidental music in a melodrama (which means drama with music, and not a blood-and-thunder absurdity), it must inevitably herald the coming of the tyrant—a cunning, cruel power that crushes its people. Pompous it is, in a sense, but there is no grandeur in it, nor any suggestion of soldierly vigour and dash. To a Turk it may possibly be inspiring; to a European it is—even when properly played—forbidding.

The national ballads—love-songs and such like—so far as I have heard them, are, as music, frankly

incomprehensible. But for quintessence of heart-breaking torture I recommend to you one of these on a gramophone, such as I have heard turning the air sour in the streets of Salonica. Death on the rack is an inadequate punishment for the perpetrator of this horror.

There lived in Uskub a prominent man with a considerable knowledge of the district and its little ways, in whose comfortable den we foregathered by night, imbibing beer and much wisdom. We two sat in easy chairs whilst he walked up and down in the tobacco smoke and recounted stories of dark doings and the ways of men.

“And that, let me tell you, is a thing that happens every day.” Then with a quick lift of the hand—“Incredible!”

Trouble, it seemed, was in the air. The *comitajis*, in spite of the efforts of the Central Committee to keep them quiet, were on the move, and an outbreak was expected all over that district within a month.

He was a restless man, much given to riding about the country alone, which in those parts is not a healthy thing to do. Besides political enemies, there are plenty of people who would slit a throat for half-a-crown. On one of these rides, at Koumanova, about four hours away, he had come across a crowd of Bulgarians, limping and hobbling. In a *khan* * hard by were more, unable to stand. One—a schoolmaster—told how they had been dragged over from the village of Ptchinia by Turkish

* Inn.

soldiers. A few days before, he said, a band of insurgents descending on the village had murdered a Turkish official and made off into the hills. The Turkish troops sent to punish the insurgents, instead of following them, had flung themselves upon the villagers, dragged them into the open, and beaten them with sticks "three fingers thick" for several hours. The miserable wretches—hardly able to crawl—were then dragged ten miles to Koumanova.

Some of them showed their battered bodies to the visitor, and their calves, thighs and backs were raw and swollen. After he left they were flung into prison. This is a perfectly authentic case, and a typical one.

It was at this village, Ptchinia, that the fight took place in which the twenty-four insurgents were killed, and it now seemed probable that they were the original offenders who brought down this visitation on the inhabitants.

As the smoke thickened the talk ranged round Wagner to the cliffs of Cornwall and back to Macedonia. Then we confided to our host something of our general idea, and gathered points as to its possibilities. To drive by way of Ptchinia to Egri-Palanka on the Bulgarian frontier, a two days' run, was the first project. With luck, it appeared, this might be done.

"There may be some wandering Albanians in the hills, and they might have a shot at you."

"I see. Well, what do we do then?"

"Oh, don't take any notice of them."

We promised to preserve, as far as possible, an air of indifference.

“Got pistols and that sort of thing? That’s all right. You probably won’t want them, but it’s better. Oh! and take some grub with you; nothing eatable on the road. Well, I hope you’ll get through—good-bye.”

There were a lot of earnest patriots about, of one sort and another, and the “sporting set” at Uskub are broadly impartial about whom they stick knives into, so it was the will of the friendly man to send an armed servant home with us to scare them off.

In the bare hotel bedroom, far into the small hours, we sprawled over the rickety table, balancing the grease-clotted candlestick on a map of the Balkan States which embraced everything from Buda-Pesth to Athens on a scale of thirty-five miles to the inch.

Sitting here in London I am measuring off with a halfpenny on that travel-worn old rag a straight three inches that takes in the whole of the hundred and fifty miles or so of our projected journey, but this little map did all we asked of it on that trek.

A grand, cool night that was, as different from those sweltering nights at Salonica as Heaven from Hell; you could breathe and think up there among the hills. So we proposed and discussed and rejected, and got up to throw stones—we kept a little heap in the corner—at the dogs outside, and lit pipes and wired in again. Moro, the old hand—the man who had been at the game of Turk-bluffing

before, and knew all their moves by heart—showed his untaught brother how to play. There is skill in the game, and the first rule is silence. The others are to move quickly and keep on moving.

To get out of the town a carriage is needed, but to order that carriage too soon is to allow the driver time to tell the police, and the police time to demand *teskaris*, and so end the journey before it is begun. Therefore every detail must be prepared and ready, every possible event foreseen, before a whisper leaks out. When the cocks began to crow and the candle died with a splutter the plan was complete.

The first thing to be done next day was to find an interpreter. He must be a Christian, or he would give us away to the Turks ; a pliable man, or he would object to being hauled about without warning ; strong in the body, or he would collapse on the trail. Our luck was in, for we met in the street a Bulgarian, bred in the hills, with a good knowledge of French and, of course, Turkish. He was looking for a job and found it at once.

A greater scribe was once advised to " buy an 'am and see life," and the first part of this injunction we proceeded to carry out faithfully, that the act might in natural sequence enable us, as it did him, to fulfil the second clause. Baggage and equipment were cut down to :

Moro :—Pyjamas, extra shirt, collar, pair of socks, toothbrush, comb and razor, rolled up in a light rain-coat ; pistol and camera. Self :—Extra shirt, pair of socks, shaving-brush, toothbrush, soap and writing - paper in a haversack ; pistol and camera.



Gentleman Joe.

[To face page 178.]

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It was decided to travel in ordinary trouser-suits instead of breeches to avoid attracting attention.

That evening the interpreter, whose honoured name was Alexander—shortened to Sandy—was allowed to know that we were going for a little drive in the country, and bidden to find a carriage, drive a bargain with the coachman and tell him that we would start at six in the morning for Koumanova. Thus, in case the Jehu, between dark and daylight, should find time to chat with the police, they would be all ready for us on the road we were not going by. For another thing, Koumanova is on the railway and therefore was less likely to arouse suspicion.

Everything went like clockwork. Sandy, fondly imagining that he would be back the same night, asked no questions. At half-past five in the morning, and not till then, did we enlighten the hotel people, demand the bill, and order the baggage to be sent to Salonica. At six—marvel of marvels—the rattletrap was there with three white Weary-Willies to drag it, decked with blue bead necklaces and ropes of bells. The blackguard-looking jarvey was promptly christened “Gentleman Joe,” and ordered to abolish the bells, the same being the outward and oracular sign of a journey into the country. So far no green-collared gentry smelling after passports.

With a heavy affectation of unconcern and a wary eye up the road we climbed into the carriage, and started with a nerve-shattering rattle. The intense desire for silence magnified every rap of

the horses' hoofs into a signal of alarm conveying the news to the whole town :

“ Run—and—catch—'em !
Quick—quick—quick—quick ! ”

No flying battalions, no keen-eyed posses of police swarmed down upon us, and we passed out of the town. A sleepy sentry, yawning for the relief, was the only sample of dread authority. Over a hill we dropped out of sight of the roofs and into the open.

Move number one had come off.

creamy sap oozes. When the sap turns brown it is taken off with a knife, wrapped in a leaf and sent to the cities, to charm its votaries to a dream-paradise.

Once every three or four miles the track ran by a cluster of hovels built of mud-bricks and straw, from which hordes of wild, barking dogs hurled themselves at the carriage. Their ragged owners, dashing after them, beat them back and shouted loud apologies. A shepherd, tramping in the dust by his bell-wether, led a long procession of pinched sheep, following each other closely—noses just off the ground. They looked ashamed to live.

Over sweeps of round-shouldered uplands where no track was, and down again among the corn and opium on the other side ; across a yellow river by a bridge made of holes with a few planks between, and trotting under the shade of some bushy poplars, we saw the village of Ptchinia dumped by the water. Through the sun and beauty of this calm country-side to see a week-old battlefield !

In a wide wooden gallery straw mats and rugs were spread by an old patriarch with a white turban. Here we sprawled—dusty and parched—to drink cold water out of a red clay pitcher. The professional Collector-of-villagers-when-they-are-wanted (who said he had successfully held this office for years) retired, grinning with pride and importance, to do his work. Savoury messes of eggs were set before us, with cheese of the nature of salt hide, and the treasure of the village—an orange ; jealously guarded for months, perhaps years, for

an occasion such as this. With slices of the sacred ham and buttermilk was the repast completed, and now, ushering his flock, the "collector" appeared.

With the help of Sandy, still in ignorance of his fate, we gathered that the twenty-four killed had come from a village up the valley. The Turkish troops drove them out, and after a running fight they made a last stand on the cone of a high,



The collector.

bare hill behind the village. Then the Turks, dashing round the base, had cut them off, and surrounding them, climbed in overwhelming force—"the hill was black with them." Finally, after a six hours' fight they "rushed" the gallant little band, who were all put to death. The morning after, the villagers dragged a cart up and fetched away the bodies—some of them slashed about the head and legs—which the neighbouring *pope* buried in the graveyard above the village. They had all

been stripped, and their clothes were sold by the troops in the market of Koumanova.

We took two of the men and climbed the hill. On its side were little piles of stones a foot high ; —“ Turki,” said the copper-faced guide, crouching to imitate a man firing over them. Turning the dome-shaped summit a well-remembered smell struck my nostrils—and I saw for a second the top of Pieter’s Hill, the stripped trees, and the canary-coloured earth and bodies

Round the dome the insurgents had built little stone schantzes, and each had a dull brown stain behind it ; round about lay a few cartridge-cases and old rags. From none of the shelters was it possible, kneeling, to see a man more than thirty yards down the hill-side, so no effective fire could have been kept up from them on the attackers, whose task must have been of the easiest. The only use the schantzes could have been was as a protection in the final rush, from which to throw dynamite bombs, the insurgents’ favourite weapons. Holes in the ground, containing segments of iron about half an inch thick, showed how vigorously they had used these little death-dealers at the last—with what damage no one knew. A puzzling fact was that not a single bullet-splash was to be found on any of the stones which lay thick about the hill.

We zig-zagged down again and saw the stone-piled graves of this tough two-dozen who had kept enormous odds at bay for six hours ;—one of the Austrians at Uskub told me that there were

two battalions of Turks in action. The village people said the troops had destroyed the first crosses put over the graves, but since the soldiers left a new one had been put up for each—just a couple of crossed sticks—and still stood.

The "collector" was a bit of a sportsman. He had been out with the bands himself in his time, and thought he knew where he could tumble across a rifle if they wanted him again. He had just come out of prison with a lot of others—introduced—who had been among the batch that were beaten and taken to Koumanova, already told of. The old white-haired man who spread our rugs was one of them, and had been in prison three weeks. Their wounds and bruises were healed, and they were not expecting another visitation yet awhile. They had made certain they would be ill-treated after the fight on the hill, as they saw *Bashi-Bazuks* (armed Turkish villagers) with the troops, who for cruelty and violence are worse than any soldier; but the Austrian officers arrived just in time to prevent trouble. The Christians, of course, are not allowed to carry arms, and therefore cannot protect themselves against their armed neighbours. The women were very unhappy; one of them, telling her story, broke down and wept.

"She must have suffered," said Sandy, quietly, "because they very seldom cry."

They gave us a great send-off—poor folk, it is seldom enough anybody treats them decently—and *vino* flowed freely.

We struck the main road again at Koumanova,

and halting an hour, came upon a native dance in full swing.

To the haphazard beating of two large drums and the wheezing of a museum clarionet, a line of men swung and leapt, their arms twined with a grasp of the next man's shoulder. Albanians, soldiers and Turkish villagers, with a big fellow at the end waving a handkerchief to keep the time. Some of them wore blue quilted jackets—very fashionable in the Uskub district—and the soldiers, coats flying, danced barefoot or slipper-shod. They all had the step and never put a foot wrong. Banked against the side of a vine-covered hovel, and round about the dancers, sat and stood a crowd of sunburned people, fezzed and turbaned, hook-nosed and snub-nosed; little girls in *shalvas*, and bull-necked Asiatic soldiers, all of them taking a vast interest in this untypical exertion of their friends.

This halt at a populous place was a mistake, and we had not been there twenty minutes before the police were on to us. A fat minion strolled up and put in some query-work on Sandy whilst the party retired gracefully on the carriage. The horses were inspanned in record time whilst we kept the stout one interested, but far from satisfied; and at last he strode off with a rising temperature to fetch his superiors. Gentleman Joe, urged by Sandy, was just fastening the last rein-buckle when three of them came over the market-place as near running as a Turk ever gets, holloaing and signalling. Up tumbled Sandy on one side, up



To the haphazard beating of two large drums a line of men swung and leapt.

scrambled Gentleman Joe on the other, smack-whack went the whip and away went the Weary-Willies. Three perspiring purple persons stood in the road with a very high pressure of steam up.

At the cross roads came a difficult five minutes, in which Sandy and Joe learned that they were to sleep far from their happy homes that night. Argument flowed from them like grain from an elevator shute till Joe cast his reins from him and refused to move, whereat our lad of languages turned upon him and helped us drive sense into him. So once more along the road.

Over the jagged line of hills ahead hung little mauve clouds, their lower edges straight and sharp as if they had been put in with a wet water-colour brush. On one side white-skirted peasants hoed tobacco ; on the other a wailing man chased a runaway bullock through the straight green mealie-fields.

There was a nice handy military post called Strätchin on the top of a hill, from which anything on the road was visible miles off. The only thing to do was to rush it and trust to luck and the driver. That dull beast, instead of entering into the spirit of the thing, kept mumbling about the slight that had been put upon him, and at the critical moment pulled up bang in front of the assembled guard. On the second the points of two walking-sticks dug into the small of his back ; he straightened up with a jump, and the equipage moved on as the sentry presented arms and the officer saluted. That was the first and last time I was ever taken for a Consul.

As night drew on the water-colour clouds developed more water and less colour, and swept down in a wicked mass emptying themselves on the dusty land and opening fire with their big guns. Not a roof to be seen, barring a secluded Bey's house, and delicacy forbade us intruding on the *harem*. Alexander was scared and low-spirited, and got off some morbid analogy about a dark fate overtaking us. At last a light showed out of the blackness ahead, and here was at least shelter.

A lone country *khan* in Turkey is not much like anything in England, unless it be a cow-house and cart-shed combined. There is a great intimacy between them and no door, so the horses are apt to stray into the *salle-à-manger*, a dried-mud apartment lavishly furnished with a ridge-and-furrow table and three lame stools. Another way in which it differs from the "Carlton" is that it has no bedrooms. In Asiatic Turkey this sort of place is called a *chiervanserai*, which means a rest-house for a caravan—generally of camels—and implies nothing more than a shelter, where food or drink cannot be had. In Macedonia they can generally produce eggs and sometimes milk.

Table d'hôte ran to three courses—local eggs, the magic ham, and Koumanova oranges. The wine-list contributed lemonade from our own lemons, and no finer drink could have been wished for. I turned in on the ploughed table; Moro in a niche in the wall.

O! night of horror! The Plagues of Egypt gat hold upon us and drave us forth from that habitation,

though we strove bravely and left the dead by hundreds on the field. Pacing heavy-eyed on the dark road I saw the form of the *khanji*,* lying in the unglazed window, continually moving a restless arm in battle with the enemy, and gleaned some grim comfort from the sight. Even this shred was torn from me by Sandy, crawling out in the hopeless dawn, who swore the knave slept undisturbed. "*La main travaille, mais les yeux ne s'ouvrent pas.*"

Two haggard wretches faced the morning light. As for Moro—"handsome Freddy"—he would have been refused admission to a Rowton doss-house. We fled the plague-spot at once, never to return.

Towards Egri-Palanka the country grew rockier. This was locally known as a "long road" because of its many bridges. The word "bridge" conveys to the mind of the Macedonian coachman simply an obstacle, to avoid which a deviation of anything from a hundred yards to a mile must be made. Bridges are useful for marking streams, but are by no means meant for the passage of traffic. A London cabby would as soon think of driving a fare through the Thames as the Macedonian of taking his vehicle on to the ordinary country bridge, seeing that the span between the two abutments is chiefly imaginary.

About ten we heard a shot or two ahead and put on a scornful face to receive the brigands, who turned out to be Turkish soldiers at target practice. The soldiers were on one side of the road and the target on the other, but I am happy to think that

* Inn-keeper.

we did not disturb them, as they continued firing during our passage across their front.

A few months before, it had occurred to the brain of some fearless reformer that the Army should be taught to shoot, and amid much misgiving and protest against this outrageous radicalism range practice was introduced for the first time. Ammunition was squandered to the extent of ten rounds per man, but whatever the result of this lengthy course of musketry on the soldier, it is pretty certain that it has been the means of damaging a large number of useful villagers, on whom was pressed the honour of marking at the butts. These compulsory volunteers are usually concealed in a tent (supposed, for the purpose of demonstration, to be bullet-proof) about twenty yards from the target. Each time a shot is fired they rush out, armed with brush and paste, and patch the bullet hole (supposing, for the purpose of demonstration, that there is one), signalling the score by laboriously waving a stick over their heads. The firing point is generally about one hundred yards off, but it would be undignified to shout.

On the outskirts of Palanka we were boarded by the most polite policeman I ever met. Not that he talked much, but he made up in bowing and "salaaming," in which the Turks have a whole code of salutes proper to persons of various stations. The one in common use is the sort of sign you would make if you wanted a drink. The wires had been at work. At the inn we found a bedroom prepared, to which the *commissaire* led the way and then sat

down fast for an hour and a half. Sandy, who was a great authority on etiquette, suggested coffee behind a screening hand, and for twenty minutes more we sipped and gurgled and handed cigarettes. In Turkey one's bedroom is a public meeting-place which any one in the neighbourhood is apt to use, and all the total strangers will consider themselves slighted if they are not received with friendship and offered refreshment. Having allowed silence to suggest what speech could not demand for some time without success, we arose and bowed the visitor gently but firmly into the passage, alleging shaving as an excuse for cutting short two hours of heavy translation. A gendarme squatted in the passage with his eye on the keyhole, and the friendly *commissaire* watched the bottom of the stairs.

After lunch a little visiting party was made up for us and we called on the *Kaimakam*, or mayor, in his *Konak*. He sat in state on a *divan* and his visitors before him; coffee and cigarettes flowed in and out of the curtained doorway. There is always a certain permanent population in a *Konak* who sit there the whole day and throw in a word once an hour. An old grey man in a Stambouli frock-coat, an unshaven youth in the local Europe dress, and a few nondescripts. It has been their habit for so long to put in their day at the *Konak* that they have forgotten what they originally came for, and having nothing else to do, don't worry about it. In the corner stands a Bulgarian peasant with a petition, head bowed and hands folded over

stomach. He has been there since early morning, and possibly the day before as well. For all the notice anyone takes of him he may be there tomorrow and several days after.

This *Kaimakam* was an affable little man and



A "konak."

talked in the same strain as the Governor-General. There were no refugees in his district, and any villages which had been so unfortunate as to fall to pieces last year had been entirely rebuilt by the fatherly Government. He allowed that a few ungrateful peasants had gone over into Bulgaria last year, but they soon came back, and were now

peacefully at work on their land, getting the hay in, and preparing for the harvest. To all of which we said, "*Oh, yes,*" and looked highly gratified. It is a great game, this bluffing match, played with smiling compliments over cigarettes and coffee, each side knowing exactly what the other is up to, but never hinting by so much as a glance that all this tea-party talk is anything but solid information. How much they knew about us we could only guess, but I suspect it was about as much as we knew ourselves. They asked our names, and wrote down that we were "travellers," but I should not have been surprised to find that the names of the very newspapers we worked for were on one of those long slips.

Our attentive *commissaire*, aware of our consuming desire to see things, determined that they should at least be of a harmless nature, and arranged a little walk into the hills that afternoon to show off a monastery.

He was a great botanist, and in half-an-hour's climb had a handful of roots and blossoms to pow-wow over, the Turkish and Bulgarian names of which were turned off the tongue with relish. We sat down to examine these specimens pretty often, mopping brows and wheezing that we were not used to walking—wishing we could have gone over in the carriage, and otherwise sowing seeds in the mind of Horticultural Henry, destined to bear fruit later. The idea that they were far superior walkers put this worthy and the gendarme escort, numbering half-a-dozen, in the best of humours. One of these

in a flood of high spirits blazed off his *Martini* at a squirrel scuttling overhead.

Botany *Bey* chatted airily on the topic of the Army, and the effect of the latest innovation—rifle-practice.

“Ask him,” I said to Sandy, “which shoot the best—the Turks or the Albanians?”

There was a look of pride in the officer’s eye as he answered. Sandy construed.

“He says that the Albanians shoot best by eye, but the Turks best by regulation.”

This artless ramble proved one thing—that we should be closely watched, and made the question of escape an interesting one. With all these attentive people about, it was impossible to take our bits of baggage and walk off into the hills. The only course seemed to be to go back in the carriage some way along the road, then get out and bolt across country; but even this brilliant idea would be knocked on the head if they gave us an escort, which on the present scale of precautions seemed very likely.

The *Kaimakam*, returning calls in the evening, proposed that we should go out to the Bulgarian frontier at Devé Bair (“Camels’ Cry,” so called because the steepness of the hill “made the camels cry out”). The post is opposite Guishevo, where old Skip and I had wandered the autumn before from Kustendil. But this magnanimous proposal proved that there was nothing to be seen there, so we told the *Kaimakam* we had decided to go back to Uskub the next afternoon. He replied with a bow that we should be well looked after, and hoped

we should have a pleasant journey. Whereat we groaned inwardly and smilingly thanked him for his kindness.

With the untiring Chickweed Charlie, who settled himself in our bedroom after supper, we arranged another personally-conducted tour of the local sights for ten o'clock the following morning, sending Sandy at midnight to order the carriage for six a.m. We had not much faith in the success of this gentle ruse, and so were not disappointed at finding Charles and two or three policemen in a state of extreme wakefulness below-stairs at five.

The usual hot milk was consumed thoughtfully. Moro was wrapping his oddments in his overcoat, and Sandy disentangling himself and the furniture from the coils of a *morceau de ficelle*, which he always produced in fathoms of snarled and knotted coils when twelve inches were needed to tie up a parcel. Moro glanced out of the window and suddenly growled, "There's our escort!" I peered through a hole in the blind, and there, sure enough, were half-a-dozen of them, mounted.

"Jiggered again, after all these precautions!"

Pipped, euchred and flummoxed. But there was still one outside chance—about thirty-three to one—and we stood by to take it if it came. The *commissaire* escorted us to the outskirts of the town, where he got out and bid us farewell with apologies for any lack of attention we might have noticed, and watched us, with many bows and a keen eye, start down the road which led only to Uskub, the escort trotting behind.

We pulled up the hood of the carriage (not because of the sun) and smoked in silence, entertained by a mental vision of the police officer and the *Kaimakam* chuckling at turning back two "Franks" with so little trouble, and sending them down a road with no off-turnings and an escort to see that they didn't come back. If those clever officials could have looked behind the carriage hood ten minutes later they would have seen the two lazy "Franks" vigorously tying their effects into portable bundles, and trying to persuade a dozen hard-boiled eggs that a great-coat pocket was an ample abiding place. At every stiff hill they got out and admired the view—especially behind them, when they noticed that the escort seemed to find the journey extremely hot, and were dropping further behind at each inspection. They therefore impressed on the driver in strange words but unmistakable tones the desirability of going as fast as his three screws were able.

An hour later, at a convenient bend of the road, they immensely astonished that worthy by diving out, girt about with haversacks and bundles, and pressing upon him a letter to be delivered at Uskub that night without fail, upon the presentation of which he would be paid. Otherwise he would have gone back to Palanka to pick up another load. This much through the mouth of the equally bewildered Alexander, who was then dragged from the box and hustled through three acres of standing corn before he knew what had got him.

CHAPTER XIII.

To go and find out and be damned
(Dear boys!)

THE long odds were landed!

How we slogged through that corn and down into the valley, with the perspiration streaming off our faces, to see our driver tooling away through the dust, presenting a large and discreet carriage-hood to the unsuspecting escort. Presently a kindly hill shut out the road, and at the first hamlet we picked up a guide for a place we were not going to, and turned him back after half-an-hour's tramp, waiting till he was out of sight to strike our own line by the map and the sun. If the pursuers asked that guide any questions, so much the better for us.

The driver some miles up the road would come to the military post at Strätchin, where he would stop to feed his horses, and the escort would close with him and hear his story. A couple of hours was the most we could count on before the hue and cry started.

The great point now was to avoid human beings of any kind. Walking knee-high through a river—to Sandy's great disgust—we skirted some huts,

crossed a road after careful scouting, and started up a dry watercourse, happily leading in the right direction. This soon grew into a narrow valley with high rocks on either side. In this capital hiding-place we lunched off the hard-boiled eggs, after which I buried the shells—peasants don't eat hard-boiled eggs in the open—at which Alexander tried to cover his giggles, and my base trail-mate laughed openly.

It was a day of dodging roads and skirting villages, of scrambling up perpendicular mountainsides, and peering for Turkish patrols on the red road below. In the afternoon we struck a mountain trail, and followed it along the range, winding out round each shoulder and down into the woody valleys. Now and again we sighted the little town of Karatova, and a thin note of distant bugles came up from its white tents. Plunging through the bush, a thorn caught my trousers and ripped away a foot of flannel above the knee, which made walking a great deal cooler. At nightfall we dropped down a ragged hillside to a snug little village, and sprawled on the balcony of the schoolhouse with a jar of water whilst the village folk came and had a look at us. The schoolmaster, a Servian, arrived by-and-by with the key, and gave food and shelter in exchange for our confidences and a *medjidieh*. *

His extra room was full of feather beds, piled on the floor, which we were careful not to approach within hopping distance. The pedagogue said he

* A silver coin worth about three shillings.

had plenty of pupils, and looked as if they worried him. He spotted our Palanka bread, so we told him the story. A goat was milked for supper, and I swathed myself in a blanket whilst Mrs. Squeers sat on the feather-beds and mended my trousers. Visitors rolled in and out, and an inquisitive Turk or two; the village seemed to be a mixed community. Naturally they took us for insurgents, and it was quite on the cards that some sporting Moslem might cut off to Karatova, half-an-hour away, and rouse out a cheery gang of wild Anatolian *Redifs*, whose habit in such matters is to set fire to the house and stand by to shoot anyone who comes out.

I bunked down on the balcony, watching the fire-flies and listening for the "fire-brigade." There was a tree on the hillside where the track came out that got more and more like a man every time I caught it with a dozing eye . . .

We woke at dawn to find that the rather unpleasant house-warming had not come off, and an hour afterwards were scrambling up a shocking shaley path—the guide, after the custom of the country, walking behind and being shown the way. He was sixty years old and looked a hundred, with the spring of a boy in his short legs. Not a hill did we see on which he had not fought a bloody battle, and slain his tens and twenties. Even twelve months ago the old rascal had been out "over there"—to the southward—sniping the sons of the Prophet from behind a stone, as befits a wise veteran. He had some grounds for his

obstreperous conduct, as he seemed to have been beaten regularly since he was twelve years old.

On a grey level path we swung along through the cool beech-forest of Karatova, away above the town, till about ten the huts of Lesnovo village showed scattered across two sides of the valley below. We kicked a way through a couple of dozen deafening curs to the old monastery, and sat down by a stone fountain in the courtyard. The quaint old white structure, brown-timbered, rose on three sides, and over the wall on the fourth stretched the sunny valley. Out came the old abbot, and three or four fat and greasy young monks with hair down their backs, who led up the creaking outside-staircase to a low room. In twenty seconds boots were off and we were full stretch on the comfortable *divans*. The greasy ones produced food and a jug of good wine, after which we unsociably went to sleep for an hour.

Waking, we found a mute audience of monks and villagers staring from the other side of the room. Here were three refugees, who, with many others, had been driven away the year before by ill-treatment and fear of death. They had lately been compelled to return by the Bulgarians of the Principality, so they said, who had given them five francs each at the frontier. Two had been provided with horses by the *Kaimakam* of Palanka (all credit to him) to enable them to get to their homes. In this case these had not been destroyed, but all their effects had been carried off by the troops. This evidence shows that the pea-

sants speak the truth, because they knew that we were friendly to them, and could easily have suppressed the details about the horses or lied about the houses if they had wished. Another man there, with a pair of good blue eyes, had been tied by the hands to a tree and beaten senseless with staves and rifle-butts.

"I met a soldier," he said, "on my way up here, one of those who beat me and put me in prison. He stopped and looked me up and down. He said, 'You are soon recovered, heh? It is time we were round to see you again.' Oh, they are clever, the Turks, but they will not catch me so easily next time. Many of my neighbours were beaten over a year ago and cannot move about yet. Yes, and the women too, they were beaten. One of them died and three gave birth to their children too soon. Well, it is a part of our lives, and how are we to avoid it? One cannot always be going away."

Even the Abbot, Father Damien, could not "avoid it," and was thrashed and hurled into prison for sheltering pilgrims whom the Turks swore were insurgents. He had not long been released, and his arms showed the marks of the blows, and his face the trace of a long cut. It can only be a hereditary hardiness to this treatment that keeps them alive, for it has also been "a part of the lives" of their ancestors for generations. It is no easy thing to be a Christian in Macedonia, and surely the Faith can have no light hold on them when they will suffer thus for it. It makes one

wonder how many of our comfortable church-folk at home would come through the same test. And I have seen these people referred to in certain London newspapers as "so-called Christians"—by fat editors in their armchairs.

Moro rashly promised to take a photograph of the covey of young monks, which had the effect of



The blue-eyed Bulgarian and "Pope" Damien.

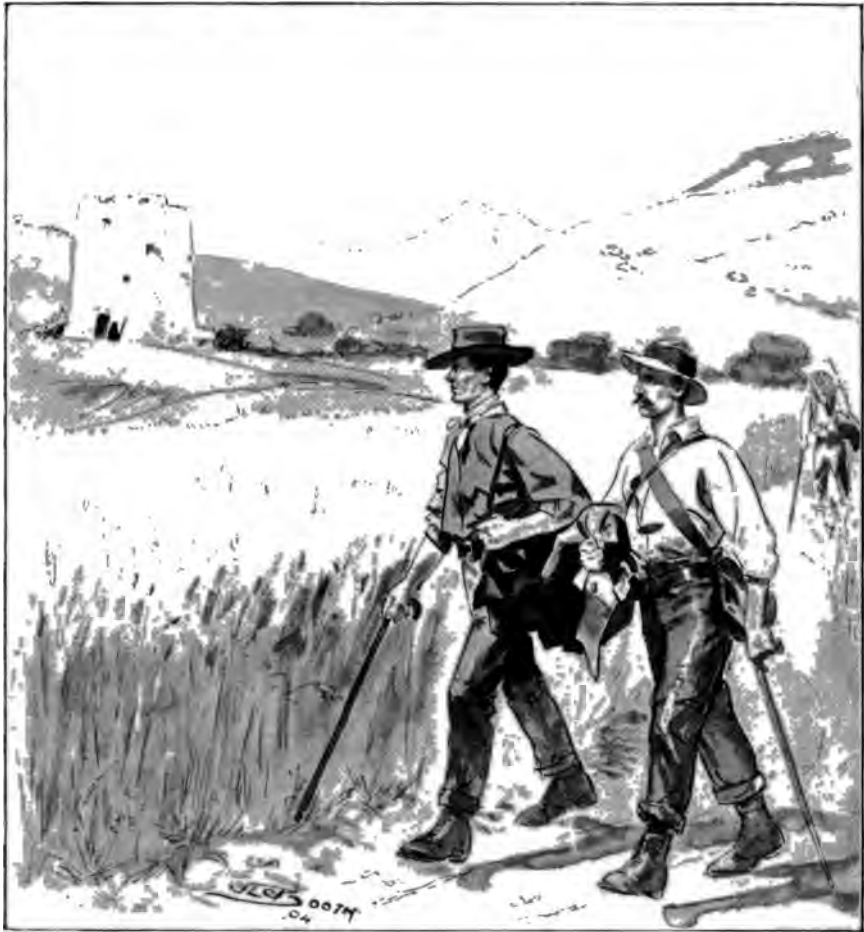
sending them into hysterics. They rushed off to get their Sunday clothes, but the villain at the last moment discovered that he was short of films and put his finger over the lens. However, they thought they were taken and were abundantly happy, so I don't suppose it mattered.

Outside the village some villainous-looking Asiatic soldiers—some of them niggers—were collecting firewood. They were the bodyguard of the tax-

collector, who went in fear of his life, and small wonder ; for if half the stories about him were true he was a big rogue, even for a Turk. Tax-gathering in Turkey opens the road to a grand and almost limitless system of robbery, every move of which this worthy seemed to have at his finger-ends. His escort were too intent on cutting sticks to notice us, and we strode away up a decent path, for once, which led over a big hill to the town of Sletovo. A delightful town to look at from behind a big bush at the top of the hill, picturesquely surrounded by tents, with even barracks to add a charm. The first sight of us from one of those tents by any intelligent soldier and our next move would be to the rear. By great luck a trail led off to the right, which seemed to skirt the tents entirely, and away we went down it, concealed by a shoulder of the hill.

At the bottom the trail turned straight into the town.

There was another path somewhere leading away to the right, but how could we get to it ? Just as we had decided on a dash through a corn-patch we came on the connecting-link, a dry water-course, and were soon on the "circular tour." But now, while keenly watching the tents on the left, an ancient, ruined tower appeared on the right front. Outside this, with his rifle leaning against the wall, squatted a sentry dirging away at the top of his voice some melancholy Turkish song. He was not more than two hundred yards off, and had a good view of the top half of us, but there was nothing to do but go ahead. I believe



For five minutes our fate hung in the balance.

[To face page 204.]



I watched that songster with one eye and the town on the opposite side with the other. For five minutes our fate hung in the balance. Our hats were unmistakable—no one but a European wears anything with a brim on it in Turkey. Once his dull eye was caught by our headgear we were booked. But the amiable creature sang on, his mind far away in his home in Anatolia, till we dropped out of sight to the next stream and took a big drink.

To the faithful interpreter all this was the reverse of entertaining, and his features, when he came up with us, said plainly that any fun we might see in it was hidden from him. We cheered his drooping spirit with "a few well-chosen words," but after wading through a river uncomfortably near the town (the trail fetched a circle right round it) the henchman was reported missing. He was unearthed, some way back, in some long grass, where he said at first he was taking his shoes and socks off, but afterwards confessed some Turks working in a field had shouted at him, on which he had dropped in his tracks and "remained steady." For a mile or so the trail ran through tobacco patches where the Turkish peasants and their women were hoeing and ploughing, but though they showed some curiosity they were not enlightened.

Late that afternoon a few drops of rain came down—a delightful sensation to the parched and dusty foot-sloggers—but presently this increased to sheets of water driven before a cold wind,

and for half-an-hour we clung, soaked, to the slimy face of a bank with little mud waterfalls dribbling into our boots.

In the thick of it came an old Bulgarian, balancing himself carefully on the slippery track, and leading a pony. As he came opposite to us the pony saw a tuft of grass and ducked his head to it, giving the leading-rope a sharp tug. The old man clutched at the air, his feet worked rapidly under him for six frantic strokes, and he fell flat on his back. Unfeeling laughter cheered him from the bank.

When the storm blew over, the path, awkward at any time, was like a switch-back skating rink, down which we slid and staggered with horrible swoops and marvellous recoveries to a boiling yellow torrent below, about as fordable as the Mersey in flood. We christened it the Orange River, with an adjective to express disgust, and scrambled off to find a resting-place for the night and get our sodden clothes dried. A jumble of straw-thatched, mud-walled huts on a hillside was as welcome a sight as a Hôtel d'Angleterre with *table d'hôte* and hot baths. A mile further on was an even more attractive-looking place, but a minaret stood high above its roofs, and we knew we could not venture there.

The *Tchorbaji*,* or headman, of the Bulgarian village received us with the handshake of friendship, and would give us all he had. Sitting on a wooden platform under the low thatch we pulled off our

* *Lit.* "Soup-maker."

wringing duds to the last stitch, the village — male and female — looking on, absorbed and unabashed. Clad in my "other" shirt, which was fortunately dry, and the lower half of Moro's pyjamas, I scrambled through the henhouse-stable to an opening where, through a wall of smoke, I could make out a fire burning. The *Tchorbaji's* wooden sandals, built for a lesser foot than mine, were against progress.

With smarting eyes I groped through the smoke towards the "window," a two-foot square hole in the wall on the floor-level, and having tumbled over a three-legged stool, sat on it, feet stretched out towards the wood fire in the middle of the hard earth floor. Using one smoke to keep out another I lit a pipe, and by degrees made out the hostess hanging up our garments to dry. Moro crawled in, and we sat coughing and blinking at the native bread-making. A flat round earthen dish, about two feet across, was made red-hot on the fire, then taken off and the dough slapped into it. Then they buried a lid in the embers, and when hot enough, put it on the top of the dough. This prehistoric oven turns out a fine crust, but the middle of the loaf is very pasty.

Sandy now appeared with an armful of wet things, and hung the hats on a bundle of clothes by the fire, which presently squealed and was discovered to be the latest member of a family fast approaching a score in number.

When the row had died down, we gathered that our "room" had been prepared. This gilded

chamber consisted of the usual mud-floor and walls, with a straw mat and home-made rugs to sleep on. Round a couple of red bolsters were disposed the contents of our pockets in small heaps, and at one end were piled all the family belongings, rolls of mats, old cases, and even a broken box with "Re-



Schmmsrlied.

finer Sugar" on it in English. A blessed sight after weeks of lettering that means nothing to you. Here we sprawled and fed under the interested eyes of a donkey and a huddle of torch-lit natives squatting outside; then rolled over and slept like hogs in a barn.

The sun was blazing again when we took the trail

at six o'clock, leaving the old man rather anxious about his safety in case the authorities got to know that he had harboured the fugitives. By this time, as we afterwards heard, cavalry patrols were out scouring the country for us in all directions, and did actually ill-treat one of the unfortunate villagers in whose hut we had slept, though whether it was this one was not plain.

The Orange River had simmered down to a babbling brook when we crossed it and boldly took the main road for Kotchana, a few miles further on. A main road here is no more than a stony path just wide enough for a country cart. Bare, burnt hills rose on both sides, un-decorated by vegetation. In the valley a mealie-patch or two represented agriculture. Behind some brick-heaps a bend of the road suddenly showed Kotchana and its unpleasant military surroundings, so another deviation was called for, straight across country through standing corn. An old wizened man sat under two saplings guarding three little plants in a box. He pointed over his shoulder and we filed along a bank, between the irrigation cuts of wet rice-fields.

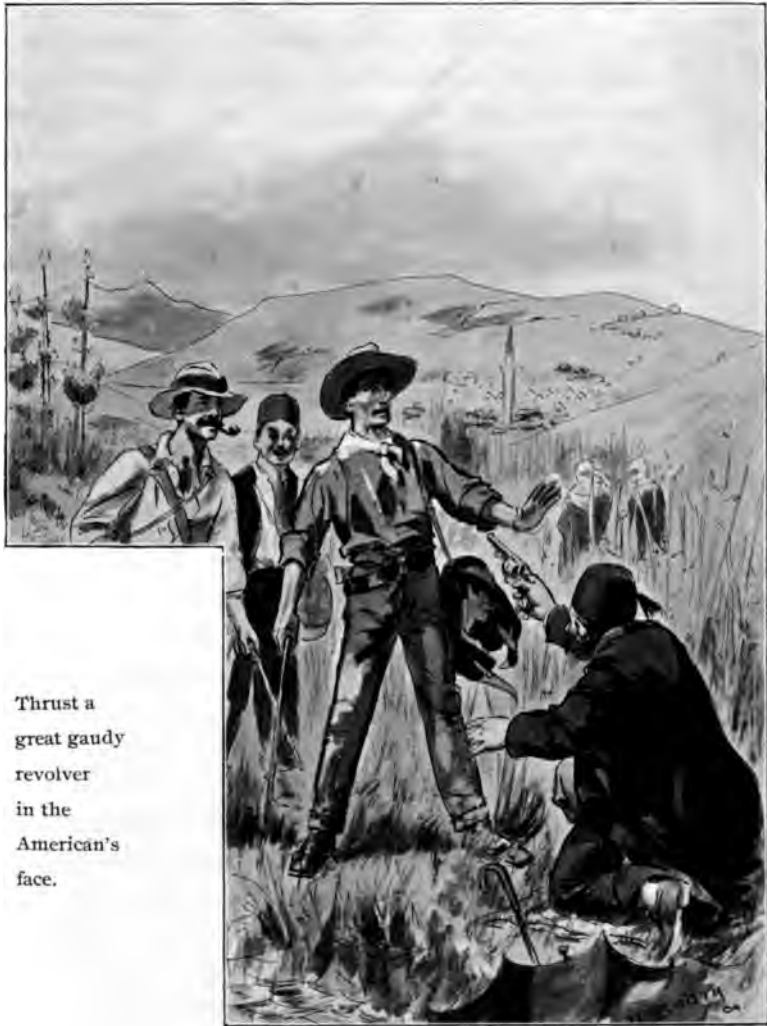
On a dry patch some Turkish women were working, white *yashmaks* flung back from their faces. At sight of the *Giaours* the veils were quickly drawn over bent heads, and Moro, watching this, stumbled on the lord of the *harem* curled up under an umbrella on the bank, snoring. Into the ear of the sleeping husband-man he bawled the name of the village ahead. The umbrella flew into

the "cut" as the stout body lurched on to its knees, and thrust a great gaudy revolver into the American's face. Luckily he did not "pull his gun" in return or the subsequent row would have raised the country against us; and whatever our aspirations, fighting our way through Turkey was not one of them. Moro held out his hand, gently chiding the stranger for his brusqueness, whilst the face behind the firearm gurgled "*Teskari*."

Sandy to the rescue! Prompt for once, he explained that these were Ingiliz milords, whose contempt for *teskaris* was only equalled by their pleasure at meeting the Turkish gentleman, and the fiery farmer pocketed his eighteenth century weapon and pointed the way.

The minarets of Vinitza village looked over a clump of trees in the distance, where the foot-hills rose to another range. Three hours later the main road again, and—of all wonders—a passable bridge of black-stained wood. The grass banks of the stream below narrowed where the cool water deepened to two feet on a sandy bottom, and in we plunged. The water seemed to soak into the dried-up skin and put out the fire of thirst the sun kindles in them that tramp under him.

In the midst of our splashings Sandy, who was doing sentry on the road, ran down in a great state of excitement with the news that a cavalry patrol was coming up at a gallop. Springing on to the bank we grabbed our clothes and belongings and ducked under a low wall. They pulled up on the bridge, and as we crouched against the stones



Thrust a
great gaudy
revolver
in the
American's
face.

[To face page 210.]

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we could hear the officer barking at the men. For the two or three minutes they stopped there we moved ne'er a muscle, and hardly breathed. I remember that my elbow was on a sharp piece of stone, and I wondered why I had been such a fool as to put it there. At last they clumped over the planks and galloped off in a cloud of dust, the officer in a white hood looking to right and left.

Another strained five minutes over.

From their direction and the pace they were travelling we judged that they had been started by the nervous old gentleman with the pistol. Anyhow main roads were evidently bad places to travel on, so we took to the fields again to avoid the energetic horsemen on their return journey.

All the morning Alexander's left shoe had been occupying his mind. Whenever an important point of direction was being settled, and the two travellers' heads were bent over the particular sixteenth of an inch on the map, the subject of this shoe and its failings was introduced in a disillusioned voice. Earlier on I had mended it with a stone, but now the owner declared that it was again ailing, and that it was not enough of a shoe to carry a Christian. We did what we could, but he lagged behind and finally was no more seen.

Within half a mile of Vinitza Moro harked back and ran him to ground in the middle of a barley field. His mind was made up. He would *not* go a step further; the Turks might take him and drive the spirit from his body. All Bulgarians were martyrs and he was firmly resolved to die.

It was all very well for us, he groaned. If we were killed our parents would receive much money, but what would the Turkish Government give his poor mother ?

Already a few stray Turks were gathering round and asking questions. It was high time to clear away from the neighbourhood of the village, but for a long time neither threats nor pleadings were of any avail. We promised him a horse from the next Bulgarian hamlet if he would only get on his legs and hobble as far, and Moro took his pack. Having got a chill the night before I was not going very strong. At last we got him going and pushed through a belt of poplars on to a dusty track, rejoiced to see some Bulgarians with a string of pack-ponies going our way. Our cripple was no sooner astride of one of these than the shoes and the martyrdom were forgotten. He cocked his *fez* and joked with his race-brothers like a clown on a donkey. The next Christian village was "*tout près*"—just over the hill—so the wayfarers said ; and we slung our oddments on one of the saddles and trudged on in the dust beside the pack-train.

CHAPTER XIV.

But that we have we gathered
With sweat and aching bones.

WE were now, as near as could be reckoned, within about forty-five miles of Djuma-bala, our point, and shoved along hoping to make it the next night if the luck held. Once in the frontier-town one could take an "easy," collect information and consider the next move, whilst the authorities got over their excitement.

In the meanwhile we were making ourselves horribly conspicuous by prancing along a main trail with all this *entourage*, and soon looked likely to suffer for it. Travelling companions gathered to the number of about thirty, all keen on knowing our destination, and as much recent history as they could get at. This habit is one of the courtesies of the road in Turkey, where a native traveller would consider himself slighted at a want of interest in his doings if a chance companion forgot to demand a recital of his past and prospects.

Sandy, worse luck, had not the gift of silence; knowing which we never entrusted him with any future plans beyond the name of the next village,

and for all he knew at any time we might be making for Siberia or the South Pole. About five times a day he took an oath of solemn silence as to our recent doings and the country we had travelled through, and just as often as a native ranged alongside we heard the whole blessed directory of place-names rolling off his babbling tongue, like a porter at Clapham Junction. When reprov'd he would put on a pained face: — “ *Mais, M'sieu, qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire?—Faut être gentil, au moins!* ”

Half-a-dozen Turks rode up through the rabble, all stuck about with knives and pistols, and a bullyragging way with them. Although inclined to be familiar and asking Moro and myself a string of questions in Turkish, they showed an ill-natured objection to being called Bill and lightly bantered in English, turning huffy at last and refusing to speak. One of these rode a little Barb mare, with a foal running by her side. Her ears were clipped, and there was hardly enough of the near one left to call an ear. Sandy, who had long ago outgrown surprise at my ignorance, explained that the animal had obviously been sick. Naturally when a horse is sick you cut off bits of his ear, and it follows that in a beast of delicate health a great deal of ear is absent. I asked what, in the case of a confirmed invalid, would be the direction of the treatment when both ears had been pruned down to the parent stem, and was not surprised to hear that the tail was the next on the list for reduction. Should the malady stubbornly refuse to yield during the piecemeal removal of this appendage,

the victim is usually left to die in its own way, the resources of veterinary science being at last ex-



A "Vlach."

hausted. In the case of bovines, as I shall show later, surgical treatment is not always resorted to

The Macedonian Veterinary Handbook, with a masterly simplicity, classes every ill known to the animal world under the one word "sickness," directing that the manner of dealing with it shall vary slightly according to the breed of beast smitten.

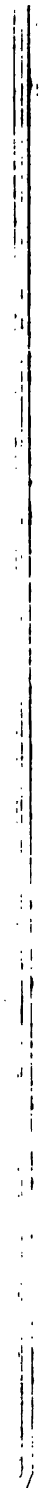
The mare with the two "off" ears was soon cantering up the road, with her master and his delightful friends very stiff at leaving no wiser than they arrived. All the same we were not sorry to find the trail by and by leading too far to the southward for our line, and persuading the disgusted Alexander to take to his sore feet again the trio struck out across a wide, shallow river—too dirty to drink—for the north-eastern hills.

The gods were with us that day, for as we rested on the new-found path another pack-train wormed its way up the hill, and again the suffering Sandy became "M.I."

Good fellows those Vlachs—a wandering tribe from Wallachia who roam the mountains from end to end of Macedonia with their rats of ponies, doing most of the carrying trade of the interior. Hillmen and horse-lovers—grave and little given to speech; striding in their white kilts and long blue coats, with a bird's-eye cloth wound turban-fashion round their heads. Generally they have well-cut features and a long fair moustache, and their blue eyes—puckered at the corners in a hundred wrinkles—look you straight and honestly in the face. They are mostly Roman Catholics, and are the only native people who do not



A Wayside Fountain.



concern themselves with the race-wars of that turbulent land. They and their ponies are free of the whole of it, and they want no more.

The two obstinate foreigners who insisted on walking when they might ride puzzled them a good bit, but "live and let live" is their motto, and they said little beyond noting approval of our length of limb.

Four hours we clambered in the sun—the promised village always "just ahead"—with the trail-thirst growing and thriving on the white dust that lined the throat and tasted sour on the dry tongue. Worse than blistered feet and chafing boots, that make you turn your feet sideways on the steep down-grades to save your crumpled toes. From every crest we searched the long descending trail for the little square fountain or the wooden trough that should be bubbling by the wayside, and once, unkindest cut of all, found one—tinder dry.

Chewing a leathery bread-crust from a forgotten pocket to create saliva, we went limping on till at last—there it was! A real running spout of cold water, sticking out of a tree stump and pouring into a trough. Of course we ought to have rinsed our mouths out and gone on, and of course we drank a quart apiece and bid good rules go to the devil. Here, whilst we rested, a gang of Arnauts* joined us—insolent rascals according to Sandy's translation; we gave them the cold shoulder and forged ahead. Serpentineing through a rocky defile, where the going was execrable, we came out bang

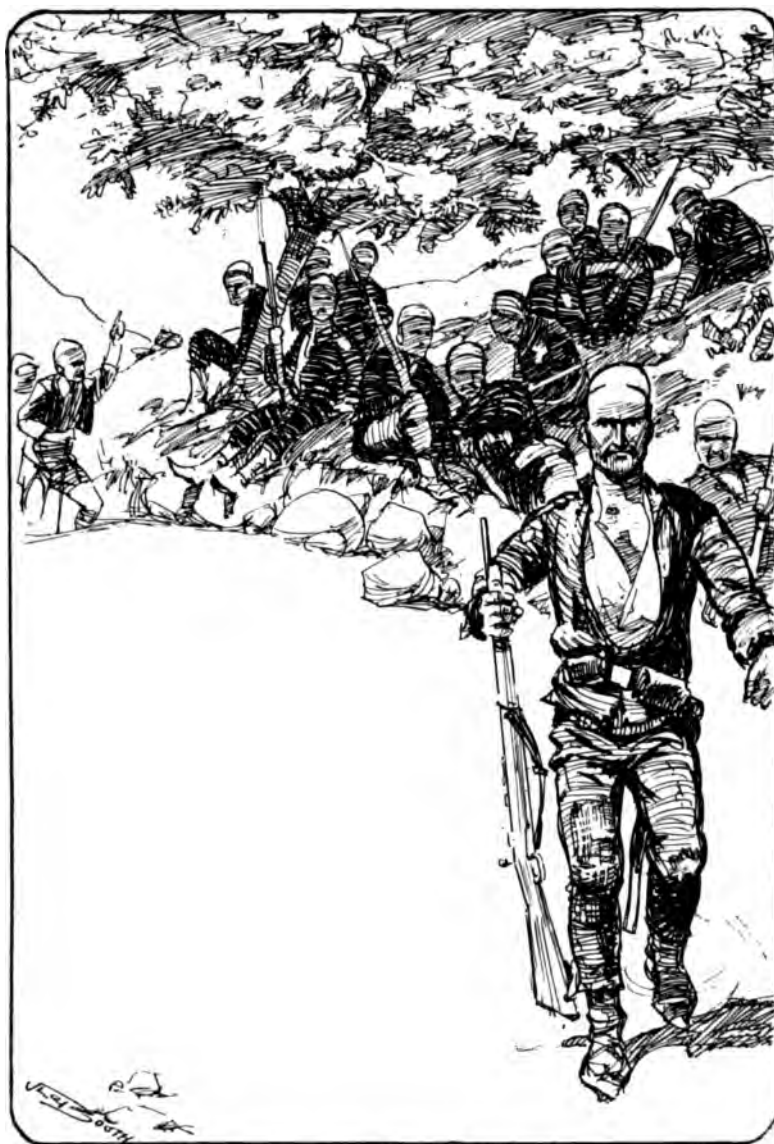
* Albanians.

in the middle of a picket of Albanian soldiers sitting under a big acacia.

One of them jumped forward and demanded passports. I told him we only showed them to officers, on which he answered that there was no officer for miles, and he intended to see them then and there. The "high and haughty" seemed the game to play, so we cocked our hats, put on enough "side" for a sergeant-major, and started to swagger off up the track. I think the "grand air" might have succeeded, but at that moment the Arnauts from the watering-place arrived, and in six words had set the whole gathering against us. They all got on their legs and swarmed round growling, and for a few minutes things looked rather nasty. Suddenly—seeing bayonets and whatnots uncomfortably near him—a happy thought was born in Sandy's noddle.

"The English passports with the great red affairs."

Excellent lad! It was a hundred to one they could not have read a *Teskari* if we had had one, and these many-folded documents from home were far more imposing. Out they came, and with drawn brows the unshaven ruffians studied Lord Lansdowne's signature upside-down. But the seals did it—"the great red affairs." Obviously nobody who bore such a sign as that on his person could be stopped by anyone under a General of Division. But they were loth to let us go, and shouted a volley of threats after us that contained no inducement to linger about for the next three



One of them jumped forward and demanded passports.

miles. From the top of a hill we looked back over the plain and made certain they were not following up with the intention of keeping their unspeakable promises.

A couple of hours later we fell in with a Bulgarian who lived hard by, and took his offer of shelter for the night. In a narrow hay-field where an old man wielded a queer-shaped scythe we plumped down and lugged off our boots. Moro's sole had been flapping in the air for miles, lashed on with relays of "morceaux de ficelle" from Sandy's endless coils. In the matter of raw toes we were about square, but I was "one up" on blisters.

The Bulgarian came back with his wife—a real beauty—and three or four towzle-headed youngsters in simple garments created by cutting three holes in a sack and sticking head and arms through them. The woman was called Seraphim. She had a refined English face and shewed a beautiful set of teeth when she smiled. Her rough shapeless clothes looked incongruous, but it would have been a shame to put her small feet, tanned and well-shaped, into any sort of stockings and shoes.

The family cow was suffering from an overdose of green barley—she had spent the previous night in the old man's patch—and was at the point of death. The household was untiring in its efforts to save her life, and sat up all night, taking turns at rubbing her mouth with salt.

This exercise I put down to a praiseworthy desire to create a counter-irritant, and so take the patient's mind off the real trouble, but the family's genuine

disappointment at not reducing her distended carcase by scrubbing her nose raw showed their unshaken faith in the "cure."

"But it aint no use to be doen' that,
Fur it's down in the stummick where the misery is at,"

as old Skip used to sing. I suggested hot blankets as a preliminary, and was listened to with the silent tolerance one shows for a child's babblings, whilst Father fetched a fresh supply of salt.

Seraphim and a pretty daughter brought out a tin of fried eggs and a flat brown loaf to our tree in the grass, and these vanished at great speed. In eleven hours' trekking we had covered about thirty miles with no more than a couple of hard-boiled eggs at mid-day, and by eight in the evening had honest appetites.

The old man with the prehistoric scythe, whose relationship was obscure, came and sat under the tree and chewed "Pioneer" with relish. He spat meditatively, and observed that he had had a shocking bad opium crop.

"If I had been a wise man I should have sown nothing but barley. But—who knows?—perhaps I shall not be able to reap as much as I have now. Do the strangers know the ways of the tithe-gatherer? He comes and looks at the crop, and he puts down on paper that it is worth so much, and one *ok* in every ten I have to give the Government. Ay, and much more than one *ok*. They won't let me reap it till the tithe-gatherer has seen it, and often he does not come till the corn

is over-ripe and rotting. Then I get nothing. If there is any good corn left it goes to the Government—I reap it and I get nothing. And this year the Turks will not let us get help for the harvesting; each man to do his own—no neighbour may help him.”

I figured out the price they got for their barley—roughly, about nine shillings a quarter. Their implements of course are of the roughest. Harrows are made of thick brushwood kept in place by two cross-pieces of wood, with a single pole for a man to haul by. A plough, compared to this, is modern, and some have an iron coulter to “face” the wooden mould-board.

The old man wandered off to look after the cow, and *pater familias* took his place. He was the picture of the happy family man, with a cheery laugh and an easy acceptance of the little troubles of his life. Here was at least a Macedonian who lived the home-life like people in other lands; quietly, and unharassed by his rulers.

“What was that? Went to Bulgaria last year! Why did you do that?”

The same old story.

“Fear of death. The soldiers came once and were coming again;—I did not wait for them.”

So much for the one untroubled peasant!

“And how did your wife and all these children stand the journey?”

“Oh—I left them behind.”

“You did? And weren’t you afraid of what the soldiers might do to them?”

“ Ah, well!—one can always get another wife.”
So much for the family-man!

He went into the cottage and gradually silence came down. The insects hummed under the trees, and the stars looked through the leaves. I did not watch them long . . .

In the morning the cow was better—an undeniable advertisement for the salt treatment—and the family had recovered their spirits. As we



Macedonian plough and harrow.

soused our heads in the stream a hardy man appeared with two ponies for our use. “ Father ” lent another, and after Alexander had been taught how to take a photograph of the gathering, we mounted the hen-coop pack-saddles, and with two natives leading pushed through a belt of trees for our last day’s journey.

On the other side of the belt, within a hundred yards of our sleeping place, was a Turkish post.

If either had known the other was there we

should not have had such an easy night, but once more ignorance was bliss. The soldiers were half-asleep, there was no officer, and the all-powerful red seals waved in their faces again did the trick. Of course, if they had arrested us at this stage they would only have taken us into Djuma under guard, but it was our intention to go in as free men. Certainly our luck was holding.

The ponies travelled in a string—one behind another; before the leader walked one of the natives. They had always travelled so, and as soon as their guide disappeared they stopped. Like their masters they had no initiative, but went well enough when led.

All that scorching day we only passed one village. Creeping through its very outskirts, half-hid in green meadows, a Turk rode up behind and started bawling to the people. Some of them began to run towards us, and we hustled the ponies into a canter. There was a camp above the village and the long-delayed capture seemed to be due at last.

“Come along, let’s have a ride for it, anyhow!”

“That is nothing, monsieur,” said Sandy, “he is only telling them the cows are in the corn.”

At mid-day we halted where a herd of goats were stripping the bushes under a big walnut tree. Hard by was an old water-mill, and the parchment-faced miller proudly showed his flat round stones that ground the corn between them. A wood-paddled shaft revolving in the rushing water beneath the floor turned the lower stone. In Shetland I have seen the self-same mill, and a

millers in the same cow-hide *charouks** tending it.

On the hillside some Bulgarians were "leading" hay. Never were known such people for thick clothes! Under a sun that turned white paper yellow in an hour, men and women struggled with the wiry hay in all their layers of winter wool. Of all the jackets and thick folds of cloth they abated not one. The white-cowled women—diamond patterns on their brown petticoats—heaped the hay with two-pronged wooden forks. Then came the men and thrust it into nets, whilst ribby ponies—buried under these—staggered across to where the stack grew by the straw-thatched hovels.

Riding and walking—a wonderful relish for walking those pack-saddles give you—a deserted sand-coloured country slipped past. Oak and ash grew thick on the hills, but no corn in the valleys, and never a hut in all the rolling miles of it.

About four the path turned a corner, and below us lay the Struma valley, and the wide *cau-de-nil* river flowing down to Lake Takinos, a hundred miles to the southward.

Here again was the hand of man, and the tobacco-fields and gardens parcelled the road-side. Among the trees of the distant plain showed, at last, the roofs of Djuma.

Down the long valley-road behind the plodding natives—hardly touched by their thirty-five mile march—and as the sun sank over the hills behind us we rode into the town.

* Sandals.

CHAPTER XV.

He shall mark our goings, question whence we came,
Set his guards about us, as in Freedom's name.

SITTING on the bed at the inn we gloated. The keen delight of the blockade-runner and of him who has done his opponent in the eye was ours, and we prepared to enjoy said opponent's discomfiture up to the top notch. Moro gave him a quarter of an hour to make his appearance—I allowed him twice as long. He was there in five minutes, in the form of a monkey-faced police officer whose countenance grew more akin to that of an astonished ourang-outang as his mind grasped the thing that had happened.

Keeping a tight hold on Sandy we served out to the man a few of the choicest items slowly and one by one, and let them soak in. Curiosity fought with politeness as his questions tumbled over each other and his eyes blinked and stared in bewilderment. "From Palanka — without *teskari* — and without escort!" It was too much for him to tackle alone, and in ten minutes he was bowing himself off to the *Konak* to get someone to help him unravel the mystery.

We dined sumptuously on roast lamb and *pilaf* (rice and gravy)—five days of eggs and bread are sufficient at a time—then, the beds being uninhabited, came sleep of the finest quality, and a great deal of it.

Two dowdy constables appeared to have spent the night on the billiard table below-stairs, but it was too lumpy to be a comfortable bed. They followed us sleepily towards the *Konak*. Hardly had we got under way when the street began to rock, and tiles and other bric-a-brac came rattling into the roadway. I stepped gingerly over a chimney made of petroleum tins. (The petroleum-tin holds Turkey together as the raw-hide *reim* does South Africa.)

“ Then come to Macedonia, where there's something in the air :
If there ain't a revolution, there's a tromblemong de terre.”

Djuma seemed to have been quaking—off and on—for some weeks, and everybody who disliked bricks on the brainpan had gone into summer quarters under little arrangements of planks which leaned against the more solid of the garden walls. All the minarets had snapped off short like sticks of white Edinburgh rock, and any parts of them that had not gone through the roofs of the mosques lay about the front door in sections. A slight shock every other day kept up people's interest, which might otherwise have flagged.

The *Kaimakam* held his court on a ring of cane-bottomed chairs in the open. He was a puzzled and uneasy man, but covered his feelings under

courteous enquiries, and by degrees we learned that we ought by rights to be dead several times over from a variety of picturesque causes which included brigands, murderous villagers, and other perils of the "Interior." The presence of a fatherly Colonel of the Line prevented our telling the great man that the only people who had caused us acute anxiety were his own soldiers. The fact was, he could make neither head nor tail of us, and we learned later from a friendly native that he viewed our doings with the keenest trepidation. Such a thing, he said, had never been done before, and he sincerely trusted would never be attempted again.

Every *Kaimakam* is responsible for the peace of his district, and if two Europeans were to disappear within his jurisdiction and the Turkish Government were made to pay compensation to the tune of some thousands of pounds, his subsequent place in the administration of his country would be a low one. We were suspected first and foremost of being in collusion with the insurgents with the object of bringing off a bogus "capture," and sharing the ransom to be extracted from the Government with the Revolutionary Committee at Sofia. Secondly we were accounted spies, who were stirring up the Christian villages against the Turks and reporting on the state of the country to Bulgaria. Many other deep designs were laid to our door, but finally they remembered that

"Allah created the English mad—the maddest of all mankind!"

and left it at that.

They could not lock us up without complications ensuing, so turned their attention to the unfortunate Alexander whom they could and did get a "cinch" on, and on hunting the hostelry for him next morning it appeared that he had been borne off to gaol by the seedy constables. This was "most tolerable and not to be endured ;"—take away our mouthpiece and we ceased to live ! But no sooner did the two madmen's shadows cover the threshold of the Mansion House than the prison gates sprang open and the criminal shambled out with a grin. He had been arrested because "no one there knew him," a terrible but hardly unexpected contingency a hundred and fifty miles from his home, so in case of his meeting any more people to whom he needed an introduction he was kept within hail after that.

My flannel trousers were now no more than honourable relics, so the local Poole was called in and manufactured a pair of tweeds (of the fashionable cut known as the " Djuma bloomer "), within two hours. I wear them yet—on dark nights.

Some one had seen refugees on the road from Barakova, on the frontier line, and for this spot we accordingly set out accompanied by many armed guardians, ahorse and afoot. These last started with such a swagger that it was considered well to take some of the head off them, and putting up best pace we soon had them cooked, with their tongues hanging out. This, in a way, squared accounts with the Palanka people who had been allowed to triumph over our supposed weakness.

At Barakova, where the road leads on to Rilo and Dubnitza, is a wooden bridge over the river which divides Bulgaria from Turkey. With a certain appropriateness the Turks' half of it is painted black and the other half white. Up and down adjoining planks in the middle pace the two hostile sentries--together, as comrades in the same squad. Part of the bridge had collapsed in the earthquake, but as each side swore it lay in the other's territory it stood very little chance of ever being repaired. A few huts and a low cook-house for the troops lay between the road and a standing camp. The tents were pitched upon circular mud walls two or three feet high, which made very comfortable dwellings of them, and the officers' tents had wooden doors and cushioned *divans* round the inside. It was midday, and the men were drawing rations, carrying on their heads trays with a roasted lamb curled up on each.

Lamb is the only meat the Turks eat ; they never kill cow or calf for food, and of course the unclean pig is accursed. The troops get this meat ration once or twice a week in well-fed regiments ; otherwise they live sparsely on *pilaf* and bread.

Over the river on the Bulgarian side was a gang of refugees resting on their way back to their Turkish homes. Our escort, fearing an escape of their two prisoners, at first would not hear of our going over the bridge, but after a good deal of trouble we got across, and the feeling of freedom which the society of those honest flat-capped soldiers inspired was strangely welcome. The

Turks who "shadowed" us became ill-visaged pigmies beside the big, hearty Bulgarian officer, pledging us at his garden table.

The ragged crowd returning into bondage squatted among their ponies and bundles on the ground.



Among them were men and women I had seen at Samakov, strengthened and stiffened in the back by nine months of a freeman's life, and eager to be hewing timber and putting new homes together on the old wasted ground.

In a little while they lashed the packs on the

ponies, humped their bundles and plodded over the bridge in a shower of rain. One of the men wore a European straw hat he had picked up somewhere. At the Turkish post a mouthing importance with papers appeared to bid them show their baggage, and there in the drenching wet their poor bits of belongings were opened and flung into the pools, to be mauled and sniffed at by a dirty gendarme.

A strong effort was made by the authorities to stop their obtrusive visitors sketching and photographing this incident, but the deed was done, and any little popularity we may have had vanished like the dew; the posting of some letters over the border had also helped to create a coolness. That was the only time I ever saw Turks turn their backs on a visitor and leave him to himself, so they must have been thoroughly disgusted.

In a little back street at Djuma there lived an old *pope* who had some refugees with him. Sandy discovered him and arranged an interview, but just as we were starting, a polite message arrived begging that the visit might be postponed for an hour, as the earthquake in the night had somewhat disordered his house. Eventually the disturbed establishment was reached, and having packed off the last surviving watchman shortly beforehand with a note to the *Kaimakam* we felt fairly sure of ten peaceful minutes. The holy man was very old and very fat; still blowing from the efforts of propping up his dwelling with poles. We sat on a sort of broad landing at the top of the staircase

with the floor on a slew, and the returned exiles wandered up.

A man in a skin cap had just come in from Dubnitza with his family. He had been sent by the Bulgarians in a carriage to the frontier, and there—having saved a little money—had hired horses and brought his weary women-folk into Djuma. His village was Bistritza—four hours away—where, since the people had been driven out, the troops had settled themselves in any houses that were not flat on the ground and gradually used them up for firewood. Their owners, now straggling back, were living four families in a house until they could rebuild the missing ones.

The Turkish Government, said Skin-cap, gave 500 piastres (about £4) to a family as a loan, to start them anew, and took a charge on their farms for repayment. Men whose houses had been effaced were given 50 piastres each (about 8s.) with which to rebuild them—"but there are plenty of soldiers on the road between the frontier and the village. He is a clever man who can get home with his fifty piastres!"

In the middle of the conference there was a trampling on the stair, and a red-faced police-sergeant arrived to bear away Sandy "to sign a paper."

"Why, yes," observed Moro, shutting up his note-book, "we'll go along too—we'd like to witness the signature."

So Sandy was not "jugged" that time.

In the meanwhile the wires were at work. The

Kaimakam was anxious to see the back of us—“*Il donnerait une bonne pièce pour vous voir filer,*” said our native friend—but he was also anxious to hold on to Alexander and visit the sins of the masters on the head of the servant.

Our idea was to work across country to the south-eastward down to Drama on the Constantinople-Salonica railway line, thus bringing in the famous Raslog district and some of the destroyed villages. The official idea inclined strongly to the main road down the Struma valley to the railway at Seres—a quiet route, and not liable to excite foreign visitors.

So we compiled messages to our Consuls which were carefully muddled in passage and arrived in Consulate Row in the form of transposition puzzles, bearing the mystic signatures, “*Morabos*” or “*Botamore.*” The Mayor meanwhile loaded up the wires with long communications to his superiors containing business and compliment in a ratio of one in forty.

During this turmoil of telegraphy we started out one morning to bathe in the rippling rivulet which watered the outskirts of the town. But this would not do for Detective-Inspector Aziz Bulbul, following lest our erring feet should stray.

“Better not bathe here—horribly uncomfortable—good bath-house in the town.”

“We are going to bathe here.”

“But no! The children of these parts are evil and would cast stones at you, and that would be a cause of shame (*une honte*) to the Sultan.”

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“ We should hate to embarrass the Sultan, but we are going to bathe here.”

“ You cannot bathe. *Kaimakam Bey's* orders.”

“ Tell *Kaimakam Bey* we wait here until he sends permission to bathe.”

Exit Chief Constable, leaving posse on guard.

In five minutes he was back with a section of infantry and an officer, who spread themselves picturesquely over the landscape on both banks, whilst the two mad ones sat in the midst of the waters—at a depth of fully nine inches—consumed with great mirth.

Out of the wilderness, one evening, appeared two ladies on pack ponies, with an escort of twenty *Zaptiehs*. * They were Mrs. King-Lewis and a Bulgarian lady finishing a tour of the wrecked villages to the eastward, in which they had been distributing funds collected by the European Relief Committees—£500 or £600 a village. They were housed, roughly enough, in a tent near the *Konak*, and sat on tin boxes eating English biscuits. What such a journey must have been for two women one could dimly guess. An enormous weight of gold on their persons, wooden pack-saddles to travel on ; heat and discomfort by day, verminous hovels to lie down in at night, and an utter want of privacy at all times. Worn out by want of sleep—an impossibility in those crawling dens—they had taken to the open and endured cold or drenching rain on the bare ground. Withal they were cheery and by no means missed the

* Mounted Police.

comic points of their pilgrimage. Stout-hearted gentlewomen, who had not been slow to answer the ancient call: "Come over into Macedonia and help us."

The commander of the escort chucked his head and clucked to himself as he saw the English lady safely over the border next day, on her road to Sofia. "Mad—all mad—even their women!"

There is a story of a hot-tempered Irishman who made his way to the frontier one day, very sick of Turkey and eager to get out of it. At the post he found a police-officer of some cosmopolitan knowledge, who remarked "Where is your *teskari*?"

"Haven't got one."

"Where are you going?"

"To Hell."

"Then show me your excommunication papers," says the Turk, quite unperturbed.

For a week we looked up the *Kaimakam* once or twice a day, bailed out Alexander now and then, and held our bathing parade, which had now become a regular thing. Still the calm and placid *Bey* answered all enquiries as to permits with "*pas encore arrivés, Monsieur*," ordered coffee and talked most amicably. At last, when the souls of the waiting ones were growing sour within them, and the permanent smell of rotten eggs in the hostelry flavoured all one ate, drank, or smoked—at last, at the silent hour of two a.m., an orderly with a telegram blundered upon our slumberous solitude. A message in Turkish from my long-suffering Consul at Salonica:—"You can go by

your own road and take interpreter—have made it all right with authorities”—or words to that effect.

Next morning the missive was laid before the Smiling One at the *Konak*, who denied that there was any mention of our henchman in it. We might go, certainly, when his orders arrived, but



"Ce n'est pas ma faute!"

the boy must remain behind. Feeling sure that the *Kaimakam* had allowed himself to overlook a word or two, the slip of hieroglyphics was borne off to the friendly native, who soon furnished a word-for-word translation in which Alexander figured largely. Returning with this revised ver-

sion to the *Konak*, the combined vials of Anglo-American wrath were overturned on the head of the Wily One, and Moro's command of the French language being unequal to the occasion, he delivered his opinion on the matter in New Orleans "straight cut." During this bi-lingual blessing the astonished official and his scandalised friends learned that to-morrow was our day for leaving Djuma, with or without ponies or escort, but certainly with our talking-machine, after which announcement we stalked haughtily from the shanty, whilst the *Kaimakam* followed to the door waving his arms and wailing, "*Messieurs, ce n'est pas ma faute!—ce n'est pas ma faute!*"

An hour later an apologetic myrmidon of the Police persuasion came to say that by a strange coincidence permission had just arrived from the Governor-General for our departure. He lingered awhile to paint the beauties of the main road aforementioned, and the official breast evidently harboured a dying hope that we might be lured back by that route.

That afternoon a General of great girth was expected in the town, and troops paraded in their best patches from dawn to dark; officers in sham boots rode passaging ponies on the toes of the front rank, trumpets howled, and the man of men—blowing through his nostrils like a pedigree Short-horn bull—compassed the length of the street without falling off, for which all credit to him.

But to adorn his temporary abode the front windows of two Christian houses were cleared of

their rows of flowers by order of a throaty Colonel—everyone looking on—and the owners were made to carry them up to the General's house, well knowing they would never see them again. Not a very serious incident in itself, but the Turk draws no line between flower-pots and any other Christian property.

Betimes in the morning there was a sound as of merry roysterers below, and coming down into the common room we found half a dozen shabby troopers doing horse-tricks round the billiard-table, and catching one another mighty cuffs on the back, bellowing in vast spirits. Outside, their little troop-horses—buried in front and rear packs, coat-rolls, saddle-bags and oddments—munched hay out of a trough. Some peasants held three miniature animals who bore the stamp of sorrow strong upon them and were destined for our use. The gear was slung on, the escort mounted and closed round, and through a crowd of gay-coloured *Tziganes*,* green-turbaned Pomaks and all the rags and bones of a Turkish street, we jogged out on the trail again.

* Gipsies.

CHAPTER XVI.

Till these make laws of their own choice and Judges of their own blood.

CAVALRY of the Line and Mounted Police divided the honour of keeping us out of mischief. The troopers are the only Turks who do not wear the *fez*; their head-dress is a little astrakhan cap with a gold lace cross on the crown, and their shoddy clothes are black with red facings. Tight black trousers disappear into loose cavalry boots, and spurs are optional—one, two, or none, according to taste. A sabre in a dented scabbard banged their left heels, and a “Martini” balanced on the front pack. They sat their Russian saddles with instinctive grace and handled their little well-bred horses like workmen.

The police had evidently been dressed at a sale of old stage costumes, flung among them in a hurry. Most of the jackets had yellow braid on the front, and some of them were large enough to meet over the chest. Brief trousers of many colours clung to their thin shanks, and white wool stockings or bare ankles pummelled the flanks of their hairy ponies.

The entire outfit was under the command of a

town - police officer, for whose authority the cavalrymen showed an elaborate indifference. They were the sort of rollicking men-at-arms one meets



in Mr. Stanley Weyman's novels, and were continually skylarking with the more sober-minded gendarmes, whom they held in good-humoured derision.

One of their most pleasing tricks was to pass a

policeman at full gallop, and with a cunning twist spin him out of the saddle. This game of Looping through Space was accepted by the police as a necessary part of escort-duty, which it would be bad form to resent. At odd times the spirit moved one of them to ride hell-for-leather at some yelping cur, with brandished sword and blood-curdling war-cries, till the dog escaped, when he lopped off the branch of a tree and returned quite happy.

The first day's trail, a mere sheep-track, lay over big stony hills where a cool wind blew across the cloud-shadows, dropping in the afternoon to a brown stream bubbling over pebbles, where the green closed in overhead and there was only room for single file. In this valley it was that Miss Stone, the American missionary, was captured by the insurgents. She was travelling with a party of Bulgarians and without escort, and was therefore easily seized and carried off into the mountains, where for months she was held to ransom, which arrived eventually in the nick of time.

A couple of hours before sunset the roofs of Raslog showed up—Mehomia, the natives call it—and the ponies splashed down its long empty street—running water from wall to wall. Under the eaves of the mud-houses stuck out round earth ovens, but no smoke rose from the cold chimneys. The town was deserted except for a few shopkeepers, and soldiers who lived by hundreds in the best houses. A year ago the Bulgarian population had vanished before the advancing troops, and very few had dared to come back.

Alexander, cooking supper at the *khan*, had some conversation with a Bulgarian schoolmaster, who under pretext of carrying up the food passed into our room and told a story of robbery and outrage by three soldiers that afternoon. An attempt was made next morning to visit the house where the affair had occurred, but in spite of the most artful dodging up and down back alleys we could not shake off the police, the presence of whom drove away all the pedagogue's nerve, and the quest had to be abandoned.

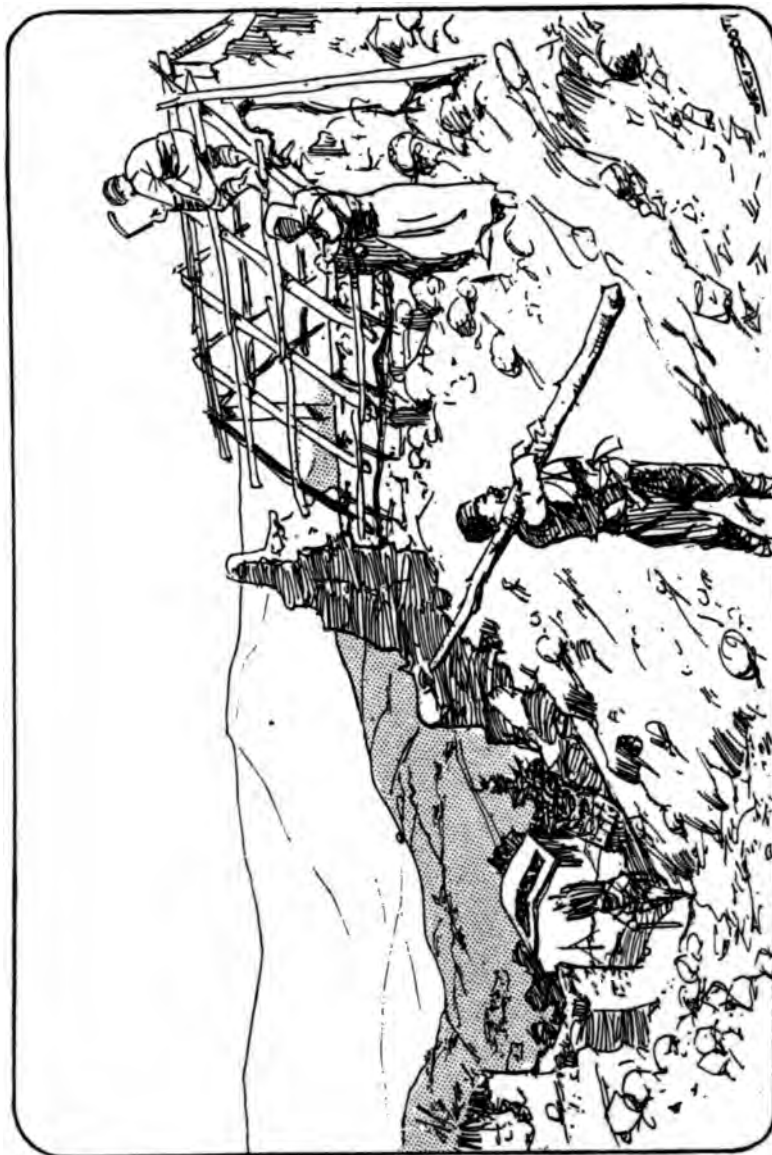
At the *khan* appeared an officer who had commanded the escort which brought up Miss Stone's ransom. This worthy, amongst others, was hoodwinked by the missionaries entrusted with the paying over of the money, and was left to guard empty treasure boxes to keep him and his warriors out of the way. Had this not been done the ransom would never have been paid, as the insurgents who received it would not approach the appointed spot so long as the troops were on the *qui vive*. Moro had gathered the truth of the story from the missionaries, but the little captain when he told his version had no idea how he had been "done in the eye," and for various reasons we did not enlighten him.

Pushing out of the town along a watery valley we passed Bansko, the little village where the ransom was paid, backed by a gaunt grey hill, with snow-peaks standing round; a network of brimming ditches kept the ponies stumbling and jumping for two or three miles. Boring up into

the hills the procession got into thick bush and some very stiff, prickly whins, which so tickled up the ponies' legs that they decided to stay where they were. It was not possible to hit them from the saddle, as they were protected by a stick-proof armoured belt of sacks, rugs, bags and gear, so they had to be encouraged by an active peasant behind with a hedge-stake. This member made rushes at unexpected moments and laid on a hail of blows backed by leonic roars intended to strike terror to the animal's heart.

At a pig-haunted village the cavalcade bestowed itself on three-legged stools for refreshment, and here Sandy was bidden to discover secretly of the innkeeper at what point the trail turned off to Kremen. Kremen had been sacked by the Turks the year before, and they were expected to be rather shy about showing it off, so nothing had been said about visiting it. The landlord cocked his eye and gave the bearings.

Two miles up, under the oaks and beeches, Moro and I with a twenty yards' lead turned off the main trail to the left. The voice of the police-officer rose aloft; then that of Sandy proclaiming that this was not the route. The answer was a flippant one, and being translated to the Turkish contingent, was followed by their combined protests lifted as one. Down the trail after us rode Alexander—a transmitting-station for the flashes of rhetoric from the group at the corner. Hunting the opposite hill-side for the village, Moro and I were laying odds on the crowd rounding us up and herding us



Kremen.

back to civilization, and if there had been a soldier in command I think he would have done it. But "no reply to urgent message," and they caved in and followed us.

Three miles further some strange heaps of rubble lay piled on each side of the path, and we were riding on a thickness of smashed tiles. This was Kremen.

Scrambling to the top of a heap of earth and stones one got the full effect.

Shapeless wall-shoulders stood out of the mass, and the end of a charred beam pointed drunkenly into the sky; all down the hillside below the loose piles bulged and the empty, shorn walls gaped; no sound came up from the crushed houses—no figure moved in the choked streets, hardly traceable in the general level of rubbish; everywhere was desolation and black ruin. A hammering began somewhere in the wreckage, and we climbed over the mounds towards the noise.

On a skeleton roof of rough-hewn poles sat a Bulgarian putting together his new home on the site of the old one. He had managed to build up his shattered walls a foot or two above the jumble of earth and stones that buried them, and with the help of a few of the old timbers—charred and blackened—he hoped to have a roof on in a couple of days. The sight of the Turks with us made him ill at ease, and he objected to being sketched.

Across the valley the green bushes had grown over the crippled walls and half hid their deformities.

At the bottom of the hill was the church—the only building in the place with a roof on—and that had a big square hole in the middle. Round the building a few little shanties had been knocked together, and under these squatted two or three old grizzled men, a box before them for a table, and on a bark shelf nailed to the wall their *lares* and *penates* in little heaps. They rose and offered us the shelter of their humble home, producing—poor things—the most terrible leathery cheese, which of course we had to eat.

Alexander was sent among the hovels out of reach of the Turks to discover whether the wretched people still had the money Mrs. King-Lewis had distributed to them, and found that so far none of it had been taken from them; the average grant was about £2 each. From some of the returned exiles, lured into a quiet corner, we learned how the village had been destroyed.

A year before, it seemed, a band of insurgents from Bulgaria had been lurking in the neighbourhood and no doubt had come to Kremen for food. The people were accused of having harboured revolutionaries, and a body of troops arrived to execute vengeance on the village, which was not done in any haphazard fashion, but deliberately and with forethought. The troops brought with them ponies carrying tins of petroleum lashed to their pack-saddles, which were unloaded, and the soldiers, producing squirts, soon covered the walls and roofs with the spirit. After each house had been thoroughly sacked the tins were emptied upon

piles of bedding and the whole village was fired at a given signal. Lurid descriptions of the usual horrible scenes followed—old men brained whilst trying to protect their daughters; women's hands cut off and their children murdered before their eyes; outrage, pillage, and massacre let loose. Truly the Turkish soldier—quiet enough in peace time—is a demon out of hell when the lust of blood is on him. The police-officer and the escort had the decency to look ashamed of their countrymen's work, and made no effort to hide the worst evidences of it.

Kremen is only a sample. The countryside is thick with the ruins of Christian villages stamped out in the same way, with the same old weary details in every case. There is nothing new in it all—it did not happen for the first time that year nor fifty years before. It has been going on for centuries, and always will go on until the Christians in Macedonia are given the right to live a freeman's life and the power to uphold that right by the only people who can give it—the Powers of Europe.

The sun-speckles fell through thick hazel leaves on to a narrow, wriggling path, and the low branches swept the saddles, so we had to lead. In the green frame ahead the width of the Mesta river lifted, rolling down a deep valley to the Ægæan near Kavala, and a ledge, sometimes no more than two feet broad, carried along its cliff banks a hundred feet above the grey-green water. On the rock-pinnacles above hung little watch-towers, mostly deserted; from one of them two sleepy soldiers

leaned out and watched us. Later, the banks sloped gently away and great beeches shared the red-leaf floor with the rustling hazels.

The police-officer stepped carefully in front, leading his pony, as he did not consider the landscape adapted to horse exercise. The most striking item of his travelling costume was a blatant check handkerchief of generous pattern which hung from beneath his *fez* and kept the sun off his fat neck. The blue uniform—its glories dimmed with dust—was girt about with children's patent-leather belts and his left arm and shoulder were snarled up in coils of green cord—probably meant for binding prisoners. Among his legs dangled a toy-shop sword, his trousers were tucked into sad-coloured socks, and Jemima boots finished the rig. To preserve the lily fairness of his dimpled hands he wore throughout the journey a pair of cotton gloves, in colour a dark white.

Ever since we started he had been working himself into a permanent perspiration in an endeavour to keep cool, and I was surprised when he suddenly turned round and proclaimed a desire for violent exercise in the form of a pistol match. A wide beech was picked out as a target ;—to me was the honour of the first shot. I fired at a three-inch bole in the middle of the trunk, and my luck was in. The man of law, hauling out a long nickelly man-slayer, clutched it in both cotton-gloved hands, clenched his face, and pulled. With the report he dropped the pop-gun and wrung his hands, groaning in pain ;—Sandy flew to his



Clutched it in both cotton-gloved hands and pulled.

aid. The pistol had fired "*très-fort*," and he was sure he had let off two cartridges at once.

An amber slip showed on the edge of the beech about twenty feet from the ground, and the damaged marksman pointed to it with a modest smile:—"Aha!—I have hit it!"

"Hit it?" said I. "Why, what were you aiming at?"

"Effendi! At the tree, of course!"

We bathed in the Mesta, and Moro enjoyed it so much that after he was dressed he fell in again with his clothes on, and we did the last five hours on foot to dry them. The trail was a wet one, and where there was no stream running down the middle of it, water-cuts of uncomfortable width crossed it every ten yards. This was all right in daylight, but before it had been dark half an hour I was dead tired of lying down in them. The path between the streams was four inches thick in dust, so we kept the escort and ponies behind and thus breathed freely. Out of the rice fields in the dusk came the croaking of frogs, and the fireflies glinted in and out of the bamboos and among the dark, scented walnut trees overhead.

A three days' moon just lasted us into the rock-cobbled streets of Nevrokop, and stumbling up to the *Konak* in the dark we went to sleep on the stone steps, whilst grizzly soldiers came peering with lanterns and the police-officer sought for shelter.

A *khan* was found at last, but there was no one in; so we broke down the door, tumbled along a maze of galleries and commandeered a room, whilst

Sandy rustled some eggs out of a hole in the kitchen. The police officer, still in cotton gloves, walked about between the beds, admiring two oleographs of a charge of Cuirassiers and the Avenue de l'Opéra. I explained them.

"A—a—ah!" sighed the creaking nuisance, "I wish I were in Paris."

"I wish you were," said I with some fervour, and henceforth there was peace.

Day's trek, fifteen hours. Distance, forty miles.

I was waked at dawn by a great uproar in the stable below. It appeared that a rooster had planted himself on the gallery-rail outside the bedroom and hailed the smiling morn with a vigour which annoyed friend Moro, who flung a boot that missed its feathery mark and hit a horse on the ground floor. The gendarmes, who were sleeping among the horses, thought *Shaitan* had seized the beasts and huddled together howling "*Mashallah!*"* The ponies soon settled down, and again peace reigned over all.

Breakfast was prolonged by efforts to flip pieces of bread into the gaping mouths of two young storks in a nest on the roof, and a tiny dribbling tap in a petroleum tin on the wall made washing largely a matter of patience. Moro, putting the lid of a cardboard box into his soleless boot on the inner gallery, was able to report progress in the saddling department by glancing over the rail. Just as the cavalcade was ready to march a Greek arrived to take up a collection for bed and board. He

* "Lord preserve us!"

had found the oleographs face to the wall—an overnight precaution against art-smitten policemen—and held himself insulted, so for his own good he was at once shown the difference between and real imaginary insult, and faded away.

A few miles from the town, without reason or warning, a broad paved road began in the middle of the plain. Of course it had never been used, as the natives regarded it in the light of a sacred curiosity which they would not defile by stepping on, and a well-worn horse-trail ran in the dust beside its weed-grown stone slabs. Through the long day's heat we climbed up and bumped down, breaking our own trail where not a goat-track crossed the rocky hills; the one thing of interest was the quenching of thirst.

Towards evening, Moro, bored with the lack of incident, persuaded one of the troopers to lend him his little white Arab. With a multitude of cautions to *promener très doucement*, he was mounted, whereupon he dug his heels into the pony's sides and shot across the plain, scattering dust and pebbles behind him. Consternation seized the men-at-arms.—“What now? What is this?”

“*Ha! He escapes;—after him for your lives!*” yelled Cotton-Gloves, taking his screw by the head and clattering away, followed by the whole train-band with whoops and howls. Moro, in a distant cloud of dust, kept his lead as the chase bounced through a river and on again with waving tails. Waiting between Sandy and myself sat the trooper who owned the flying steed, trying to look dignified

on a pack-saddle, and gritting his teeth as his fierce eyes followed the hunt.

Suddenly the pursuers were seen to pull up in a great commotion, and through their midst burst the fugitive, riding a strong finish. The angry trooper seized his blowing mount as Moro flung himself off, and the flood-gates of laughter were opened. Shouts of merriment clove the air, and at last, to their credit, the ruffled Turks joined in.

That night we lay at a Swiss village made up largely of bell-towers which all gave forth at three in the morning in a rousing carillon chorus—“*pour reveiller le village,*” according to Sandy. There was nothing for it but to get up. A friendly old Turkish rag-bag in the street offered us coffee, but gently refused to take a light from my cigarette. He explained in apologetic whispers to the boy that to take a light from a *Giaour* meant certain descent into the fires of *Gehennum* after death, which even his constitutional courtesy would not allow him to risk.

Coffee at dawn is allowable, but to be compelled to swallow a thick sugary concoction at mid-day is an imposition. At the most grilling hour of that last grilling day the cavalcade, parched inside and out, drew wearily to a lonely village of the plain. Before we could hide, the local officers were on us, and bore us to their barrack to inflict this hospitable torture on our burnt-brick bodies. To refuse is insult. Heavens be thanked for the mercy of the glass of cold water which always accompanies it!

The well-meaning men were shocked at our "neglected" costume of open shirts, and foretold malignant fevers from the evil airs of the Drama valley. From the saddle this deadly district looked much like other valleys, so we braved its terrors in *decolleté* and still live.

Miles and miles of barley in a flat plain, and—great rarity—a field or two of oats; in their midst an oasis of birches and a clear spring of magnificent cold water. Overhead in the branches shrieked and twittered a flock of starlings, and on the grass in the shade lay half a dozen Bulgarian carriers, asleep by their ponies, swathed to the eyes in immense rolls of rug and blanket. Their foreheads shone with heavy sweat, but they clung to their bedding;—they "feared to catch cold," Sandy explained. The ponies fed with their saddles on—they are never taken off on a journey except at night.

The dusty troopers pulled themselves together for their entry into Drama, and as we trotted over a patch of stubble its minarets pointed up in the distance with the railway line running out behind them.

And so ended the "long trek." Across all its good full days Uskub and the starting-morning looked a long way back, and the mind-pictures of this journey through the Forbidden Land stretched away to the beginning in clear perspective;—a new collection to be added to the old, and studied with strong enjoyment in the smoke of many pipes of peace. In the span of those moving days the heart of Macedonia was revealed to me, and I knew

those things which were hidden from the dweller in cities, furnished with "reliable statistics." For present needs, we had found the people coming back; proved the Turkish lies about their rebuilt homes, and seen their intolerable life, and their weariness of revolt promising quiet for awhile. With these few facts and the greater knowledge that soaks in as you go, the three of us came down out of our hunting-grounds in the hills, with three hundred miles of trail behind us, and jogged across the last of the open from the whistle of the starlings to the whistle of the train.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DARDANELLES.

Here, in a large and a sunlit land,
Where no wrong bites to the bone.

SQUATTING on the blistering fore-castle-head of a little lop-sided Italian steamer, with the island of Lemnos on the quarter, a cheery horde of young Albanians worried round the wonderful belongings of the stranger in their midst. Two lean, cropped heads were bending over the camera and admiring a portrait of the sky in the finder; behind them a white-capped warrior of twenty took a miniature view of the deck-seams through the wrong end of the field-glasses. Lithe, tanned fingers strove to roll a pinch of unyielding "Pioneer" into a cigarette, whilst the stranger accepted a gift of the native birdseye and drew the hot smoke through a briar pipe.

The careless, high-spirited youngsters — two hundred of them — were being taken to Constantinople as recruits for the Sultan's Bodyguard, and as their drawing-room manners had been a little neglected in their mountain homes, they were

causing acute anxiety to the captain and officers of the old packet, who had made elaborate preparations for quelling them with hot-water hoses and suchlike superfluous objects. Puzzled at the stiffness with which they were received, they welcomed a friendly-disposed visitor bearing tobacco and magic boxes, and made me free of their buzzing camp in the bows, thrumming at nightfall on two-stringed lutes with weird songs in *tremolo*.

Excitement over the "*Malacca Incident*" of 1904 was at full blast, and there was talk of the Russians taking the captured steamer through the Dardanelles; so here was I, on the off-chance, lurching down to the Straits at ten knots an hour.

The poop was inhabited by one or two elderly Turks with honourable beards and well-filled *harems*. The budding guardsmen, in their search after knowledge, spread themselves all over the ship and interfered with the privacy of these family circles. Shouldering past the wrathful husbands, in gleeful clusters they pulled the canvas jacket off the wheel and rejoiced over its brass fittings; in awe-stricken groups they listened, spellbound, to the spirit-voice of the Cherub log clinking on the taffrail. But these joys were forbidden, and the Second Officer hastened to reprove them, whereat they played push-ball with him in their own boisterous fashion. He escaped collarless, and scuttled below for their colonel—the only man on board for whom they cared a button. This stern parent, emerging from his bunk in a baggy sleeping-

suit, had only to show his eagle nose over the ladder and his naughty children, cowering behind sky-



The colonel in sight.

lights and benches, doubled back to their forecastle with temporarily chastened spirits.

On the hatches of the well-deck was a bivouac of Turkish women. On board ship they do not

mind showing their faces, and some were well worth looking at ;—small features and big dreamy eyes, with little well-formed mouths and sometimes a black curl showing under the white *yashmak*. Going always veiled they have sallow complexions, but the pallor suits their beauty. Young girls, handsome women, and the old crones who looked after them sat together on piles of bedding and coloured rugs, without occupation and saying little. They seemed to look sadly on life, and truly it holds little for them.

Forging through the ultramarine water we turned the ancient fortress of Sedil Bahr—the “ Old Castle of Europe ” of long-dead mariners—and pointed into the narrowing Straits.

On the European shore, bare, bush-dotted cliffs ; on the other side, behind the windmills and the hump of Achilles' tomb, the Plain of Troy goes back to green foothills and the faint jagged edge of Mount Ida. The bell rang *Slow* and *Stop* down among the Hartlepool engines, and she lay in a jumble of shore-craft off Chanak, sometimes called Sultanieh. A string of low houses and jetties hung over the water with here and there a taller white building under the flag of a Vice-Consulate ; rough-tiled roofs and a minaret or two, and at the western end the old white tower and clean-cut earthworks of a fort, where a few elderly muzzles pointed through the embrasures. A great show of mystery and concealment is kept up around these forts, and woe betide the luckless alien who blunders within a stone's throw of their lynx-eyed sentries,

for here this vague measurement is defined and demonstrated with good-sized pebbles by the excited guardians. Even English ladies in their dinghy have been a target for this branch of coast-defence.

The shores of the Hellespont fairly bristle with fortresses, and the impression forces itself on the



Turkish women.

simple visitor that in a cross-fire an enemy running down the middle might conceivably suffer less than friends on the opposite bank. There is little likelihood of the precious old relics ever being fired, however, as the coast-gunners are mostly sane men, not given to throwing their lives away in dangerous experiments.

At the time of the mutiny on board the *Kniaz Potemkin* in the Black Sea, there was much talk of re-armament for the Dardanelles forts, but I should be surprised to find that any such wild scheme has actually been put into effect.

Off Fort Naghara, north-east of the Chanak anchorage, lay three imposing Turkish warships that for many motionless years have maintained a dignified and commanding position, which they will stoutly continue to hold so long as the principal parts of their engines are missing. Years ago, so runs the legend, there was a self-propelling gunboat in the Turkish Navy, which in a moment of spite was ordered to proceed to Malta with a message. Manfully the little crew steamed out on their perilous mission. Days—weeks passed by, but no tidings came of the handful of devoted souls. At last—worn with waiting—the weary watchers witnessed the wished-for wanderers wending their way to welcome wharf. The gallant commander stepped on shore and reported himself.

“Well,” said the authorities, “what news?”

The adventurer closed his melancholy eyes.—
“*Malta yok!*” *

In the Chanak anchorage lay two or three salvage tugs flying the British red ensign. An Englishman there owns a fleet of them, and has all the salvage work of the Levant in the palm of his hand; he wears a white cross on a red funnel. Two German boats with red crosses had lately arrived to drive the Briton from the seas, but when they set out to

* “There is no Malta.”

pick up a stranded vessel they usually met the white cross towing her in.

More than half the steamers that work through the Straits are British ; the balance is made up of Turk, Italian, Austrian and Greek. No vessel may pass the forts from the south-western end after sundown, and the last hours of daylight see one belated tramp after another drop her anchor off the village of Quarantine—just inside the mouth—and swing her high, red-patched sides round with the current. With sunrise and an open door they go threshing through the level water—half the screw out and a mountain of foam under the counter—to the Black Sea ports for their load of grain. Nearly everything goes up in ballast, for foreign goods are not welcomed on that coast.

One night a Russian Volunteer ship went through—the second of these wolves in sheep's clothing. It was nearly full moon, and across the water the European shore showed pale and unreal. Suddenly a hooting broke out, and a cluster of lights came round Fort Naghara. Then a hull, funnel and masts took shape, and the merchant-cruiser ploughed past unchallenged—her decks thronged with troops—to the open seas where she could hoist peace-flag or war-flag, whichever she thought safest.

The old town of Chanak—which means a pot—was first a Genoese settlement. Then came the Greek potters, who gained it a reputation and its present name, and they are still represented by their descendants, but their craft has surely been

lost in the ages. Earthen water-jars and little jugs, of a shape seen all over the Levant, with dabs and zig-zags of colour, are all the modern thumb-workers have to show.

Down the long *bazar* their hutches crowd into the line of little open-fronted shops under cranky wooden shades. Here are *fez*-fashioners whose wares sit upon coffee-pot blocks with straight handles; harness makers who conjure amazing results out of wood and string; pasty and cheese sellers; Europe-shops bedangled with crazy-coloured handkerchiefs; lemonade-mongers sitting behind big flagons of canary-coloured hair-wash; fruit-sellers with water-melons piled out on the cobbles, and all the shabby-gaudy colour and heat of the East.

Down the narrow alley under the torn scraps of cord-stretched awning comes a string of gurgling camels following a donkey. A villainous *Zibek* with short blue breeches and tanned legs leads the jackass. The camels are tied fore and aft with strings from their great pack-saddles, and one or two carry a big, jangling Swiss cow-bell.

Now the camelcade must halt to allow passage for a white, weedy horse and a dwarf Deadwood coach slung high above four small wheels—seats on the floor-level. Sitting cross-legged in this luxurious conveyance are some Turkish ladies going visiting; the native population does all its travelling thus. A "growler" with three wheels and no cushions would be a Pullman car by comparison.



The Dardanelles.



Straight across from Chanak is the old-world castle of Kilid Bahr, its heart-shaped embattled wall sheltering a square keep by the water's edge. A little north of it is a bunch of Cypress trees where a man may finish his swim if he is keen on emulating Leander. I tackled it on a calm day, going overboard from a shore-boat near the warships. For the first half of the journey a warm current runs northward, towards Constantinople, at about two miles an hour. There were several unaccountable cold patches in the water, and one or two steamers passing within forty or fifty yards churned up some icy waves of it that seemed to come from the very bed of the channel.

After half an hour a head-wind got up, chopping the water into a troublesome jabble and turning it intense blue, and the sandy hill and green bush-clumps looked a long way off. About half-way over the current runs in the opposite direction—towards the mouth of the Straits—rather faster than the first stream, and the landing-point on the opposite shore, which had been drifting gradually away, was brought rapidly back into line. Old Osman in the boat behind waved the direction—a useful guide when one is swimming on the back. One or two Mytos *caiques* were heading across, heeling over to the press of their leg-o'-mutton sails. A Navy boat passed, and the men in her shouted and wanted to interfere, but the old waterman soothed them and they splashed off out of sight.

Three hundred yards from the European shore

the current suddenly ran like a mill-race, but the active bit was soon crossed and a landing made below the Cypress trees—an hour and seven minutes from the start. The strait at that point is a mile wide, and counting the drifts on the currents one travels about three miles.

The Turks in this part of Asia Minor are law-abiding and live on good terms with the Christians—a striking contrast to the state of affairs over the water. The troops are kept well in hand by the General commanding the coast defences, Maghar Pasha; and the Governor, Hifzi Pasha, is that *rara avis* of the East—an honest man. Backed by the Commandant of Gendarmerie, a man of energy and an iron hand, he keeps the Sanjak * quiet, and has cleared it of bad characters to such a tune that the traders—Greeks, Jews and Armenians—can now carry goods and specie unescorted in the interior without fear of robbery.

I think I have hinted before that the Turkish soldier's pay is of the nature of an elusive vision which seldom materialises—a will-o'-the-wisp which he sees ever flitting in the distance, luring him on. On a few rare occasions the pleasures of anticipation have been known to pall upon him and he has clamoured in a body for solid cash.

Once upon a time the Dardanelles troops, in spite of their superior discipline, became so noisy that the General (not the worthy officer aforementioned) pulled himself together and looked about for something to throw down to them. It

* Province.

happened just then that there had been a more than usually pressing call for funds for his Sultanic Majesty's coffers at Constantinople, and the Commandant of Gendarmerie had opened a subscription-list for the peasantry, Moslems as well as Christians, to which they contributed in their usual open-handed manner. It is surprising how generous one can be when the alternative is indefinite gaol.

The proceeds of this levy were sent to the coast for shipment to Constantinople, but the needy General, whose motto had ever been "Charity begins at home," fell upon the convoy and fed his obstreperous children on it. So the rustic shareholders were told there had been a slight mistake and would they mind paying up the second call?

There was no news of the *Malacca*, and no event calculated to shake Europe to its foundations seemed likely to happen in the Dardanelles for a day or two, so, from the hospitable "Maison Calvert" at Chanak, I set out for Troy Plain and "Thymbra," where a son of the house farmed his own thousand acres.

On the strength of painful memories concerning pack-saddles I had this time conveyed my own old bit of pigskin from Salonica in a sack, which handy envelope now lay between "Parker's pride" and the back of a lean white pony. In this blissful land you can *choose* whether you will take a mounted gendarme or not. Think of it! Like asking whether you prefer hunting or hanging.

A good road touches the little Greek coast villages, and up on the divide where it was worn out they were banking and laying a new one. White bullocks stood stolidly in the shade, tail-lashing at the flies. Magpies by dozens flapped over the *Agnus Castus* bushes, and weasels scurried under the scrub. White-shrouded heads of soft-eyed women peered over the low wheat stacks, and the steady wind spread the glinting dust in even clouds. Clean smell of straw and fierce, ripening sun.

By a roadside spring a big valonea oak threw a shadow circle on the grass :

“ Here, with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,
 And wilderness is Paradise enow.”

The pony chewed the crust and a piece of cucumber, having learned in an abstemious career to eat what he could get whenever he could get it.

Hissarlik, as the natives call the site of Troy, is not particularly easy to find, and the narrow trail has many off-shoots. At the end of six hours' riding a few scattered blocks of marble gleam in the thick brushwood, and you are among the ruins. Without knowledge of the subject and without a guide the pits and intersecting wall-layers—the piled stones and half-hid bricks of the excavations are unintelligible. Dr. Schliemann discovered seven cities, one on top of another, but even with a list of them and what you might call their ingredients I could make very little of it. Scrambling among the stones at the bottom of one of the pits, nosing

the sheer wall-section, I thought I had lit on city number three, which the list said was made of shells and fishbones, when a dark figure with knives and *yataghans* protruding from it loomed on the edge of the excavation and signalled "come out of that." On rising to the surface I was given to understand that casual wanderers were not supposed to paw the buried cities, and another portentous discovery was lost to the world.

Jogging over the hump and dip of the Troad, I pointed for a dark line of poplars lifting now and again in the distance. A cattle-drover with a red-swathed head and an old six-foot firelock on his back holloed a husky dog round the flank of his herd. A string of supercilious camels padded past, and a solitary stork flopped solemnly over the big poplars. Out on the far side of them a long stretch of stubble carried away to clustered oaks and a little hill capped with white walls in the green. Thymbra the ideal!

At the hill-foot they were threshing wheat.

Picture the contents of a thousand straw-mattresses strewn over an open-air circus ring, and half-a-dozen pairs of horses racing round and round on the crushed straw drawing flying figures after them—by the reins, apparently; a setting of oaks and poplars, a blazing sun and a roaring wind swishing the chaff in your eyes—and you have the first impression of a threshing-floor.

Going closer you see that each pair of little clean-legged horses is pulling a flat board, turned up a little at the fore-end. On this stands a Greek

girl, her head swathed in a white *yashmak* with a long end flying behind her in the wind, for she is as careful of her complexion as any Parisienne. She is clad in a blouse and voluminous *shalvas*, caught in below the knee and showing her sturdy legs in woollen stockings—feet planted firmly apart to keep her balance on her flying sleigh. The under part of this board is set with rows of sharp flints that chop the straw and dash the corn out of the ear. Since the days of Abraham this threshing-board has not been altered; so with the other farm-implements.

Round and round fly the teams, now steadying to a trot, now breaking into a headlong gallop to the wild cries of the merry little drivers. And these know something of driving. Two teams coming one way meet two coming the other way, spread, and let them through with six inches to spare between each of the four. To do this neatly at full gallop needs an eye and a hand.

Beside the threshing-floor is a piled bank of threshed-out corn and chaff in which wade the winnowers—bare-legged men—tossing the stuff with toothed wooden shovels. A quick turn of the wrist drops the grain to one side and the chaff flies downwind with a shimmer of gold; the “winnowing-wind” they call it, and it blows all the summer out of the north.

By the path up to the homestead rise the gaunt limbs of an American windmill-pump, the steady “clank-clank” of the rod answering the breeze. There is an assurance about that metallic voice on its iron



Threshing at Thymbra.

legs, untroubled by its Old Testament setting. A calm assertion of knowledge and power and the relentless March of Machinery as it observes through its nose "Crank—Tank—Yank."

And this hill is Homer's Thymbra—"Thymbra's ancient wall"—where Apollo had a temple, and where the Phrygian horse were encamped. To-day that wall is underground and on its site stand orderly farm buildings and a little white house with a shady verandah. The friendly Englishman, in tweeds and stockings, walked me round to the trellised belvedere above the garden where his wife, a charming fair-haired Greek lady, was pouring out tea. The Hope of the House, a hearty young Saxon of six, laughed under a big sailor hat, between the brim and crown of which strained relations existed, and his pretty dark-haired sister brought a big green bowl filled with glorious firm butter, kept cool at the bottom of a dry well.

As we talked a long humming note came up from the plain below. It grew to a chord, for all the world like half-a-dozen finger-bowls with wet fingers circling their edges. Now and then there was a deep key-note like a 'cello, and a chirping like a piccolo. The chords changed, slid into minors and out again—always harmonious—growing in volume. What was this Thymbrian orchestra?

On the white, blue-shadowed road to the threshing floor hung a little cloud of dust, gold in the sunset. Bullock carts! The Æolian music was no more than the crying of the ungreased wheels on their wooden axles as the Guernsey-coloured

bullocks drew their little grain-laden carts to the granary. But if one of those gentlemen who compose "tone poems" wants to write a *pastorale* there is a theme for him.

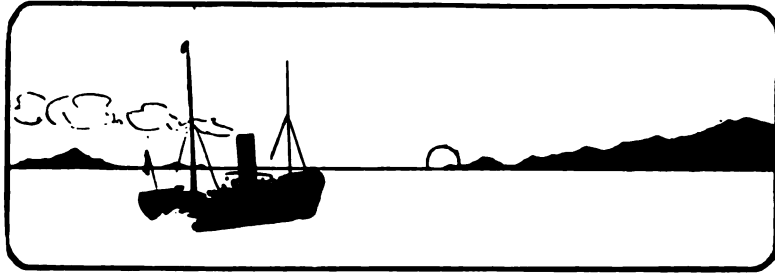
The spell of that idyllic place was a strong one. The life and vigour of the threshing teams and the hardy children of the ancient Trojans—strong men and buxom women—who worked them; clean wind across long, waving acres of black-bearded wheat; the hum of bees under the valoneas, seeking the honey-dew among their leaves; the colours of the sloping garden and its wealth of fruit—plums, quinces, cherries, apricots and almonds, grapes in wide-stretching vineyards and great strawberries of celestial flavour. The deep verandah in cool moonlight, and the big moths darting through the creepers; or the bivouac under the pines at dawn, when the corn-guard woke to catch the hobbled horses.

There with the "happy family"—kindest folk—I spent some blissful days in thrall of that good life. In the wide choice this patchwork world has to offer, it would be hard to beat.

* * * * *

Off the mouth of the Dardanelles H.M.S. *Lancaster* cruised, waiting for developments. On the cliffs, over the heat-shimmer of the burning sand, sat the news-hunter, staring through field-glasses beyond Tenedos and the golden islands reflected in the sea. Two days later the "*Malacca Incident*" had passed.

As the sun went down like a big red beehive over the end of Imbros, a tiny Turkish steamer, with the old kit-bag and the saddle in its sack, waddled out past Sedil Bahr and pointed away on the Home Trail.



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